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A
LETTER

FROM

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M. ROUSSEAU, R.

OF GENEVA,

TO

M. D'ALEMBERT,

OF PARIS.

Concerning the Effects of THEATRICAL
ENTERTAINMENTS on the Manners of
Mankind.

Translated from the FRENCH.

Printed for J. NOURSE at the *Lamb* opposite
Katherine-Street in the Strand.

MDCCLIX.

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MDCCLX.

As every body has not the opportunity to recur to, I shall transcribe from the article of Geneva the passage which engaged me in this dispute. It should rather have deterred me from writing, did I aspire to the honours of science of life: but I did not to create another, in which I am afraid of no competitor.

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Upon seeing this passage by itself, the reader will be surprized at the zeal of the writer; but upon perusing it in the article it belongs to, he will be sensible of the necessity of it.

I AM to blame, if I have taken pen in hand without necessity. It can afford me neither pleasure nor profit, to attack M. D'Alembert. His person I respect; his talents I admire; his works I am fond of: I am sensible of the good things he has said of my country; I have even been honoured myself with his encomiums; so that in every respect I am greatly in his debt. But no respect whatever should supersede our duty, unless morality consists in appearances. Justice and truth are the first obligations of man: humanity, his country, are his first affections. When private considerations make him invert this order, he commits a crime. Can I then be censured for doing my duty? To answer me properly, a person must love his country, and have a greater regard to his moral obligations, than fear of displeasing mankind.

As every body has not the Encyclopedia to recur to, I shall transcribe from the article of Geneva the passage which engaged me in this dispute. It should rather have deterred me from writing, did I aspire to the honour of elegance of style: but I dare to court another, in which I am afraid of no competitor. Upon seeing this passage by itself, the reader will be surprized at the zeal of the writer; but upon perusing it in the article it belongs to, he will find that a point which Geneva has no concern with at present, whatever it may have hereafter, this unimportant point, the theatre, takes up one eighth part of what he has to say upon the subject. I am going to say: "Plays are not tolerated at Geneva: not that the inhabitants disapprove of such entertainments in themselves; but they say, they are afraid of the vanity of dress, the dissipation and irreligion, which the conversation of comedians is apt to spread among young people. But is there no possibility of remedying this inconveniency, and of regulating the conduct of players by severe laws, properly executed? Geneva by such means might reconcile the stage to good morals, and enjoy the advantages of both: by theatrical entertainments the inhabitants of this city would acquire a right taste,

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" taste, and a delicate feeling, which it is
 " impossible for them otherwise to attain :
 " thus learning would be improved, with-
 " out encouraging libertinism, and Gene-
 " va would become the center of Spartan
 " wisdom and Athenian urbanity. There
 " is still another consideration, which ought
 " perhaps to engage so sage a republic to
 " tolerate plays. The barbarous prejudice
 " which generally obtains against the pro-
 " fession of a comedian, together with the
 " contempt in which we hold a set of people,
 " who contribute so greatly to the progress
 " and support of the arts, is certainly one
 " of the principal causes of the irregular
 " conduct, which we lay to their charge :
 " they strive to indemnify themselves by idle
 " pleasures, for the disrepute annexed to their
 " condition of life. A player, who behaves
 " himself like a man of character, is doubly
 " deserving of respect; and yet we hardly
 " take any notice of him. The public ex-
 " tortioner who insults the poor, and enriches
 " himself by the necessities of the state; the
 " courtier who fawns and cringes, but never
 " pays his debts; these are the men we
 " honour most. Were comedians to be
 " not only tolerated at Geneva, but subjected
 " at first to prudent regulations, protected
 " and

“and encouraged afterwards according to
“their good behaviour, and at length raised
“to a level with the rest of the inhabitants,
“this city would shortly have the advantage
“of what is generally looked upon as a phæ-
“nomenon, though it is we that make it
“such, viz. a company of worthy comedians.
“Again, this would soon become the most
“flourishing company in Europe: a great
“many, who have a relish and genius for
“the stage, but are afraid to debase them-
“selves by following the profession, would
“flock from different parts to Geneva, in
“order to display their rare and engaging
“abilities, not only without apprehension of
“ignominy, but with expectation of esteem
“and applause. Then it is that this city,
“which for want of public entertainments,
“is considered by numbers of Frenchmen as a
“gloomy place, would be reckoned the seat
“of rational pleasures, as it is of philosophy
“and liberty; and strangers would no longer
“be surprized that decent and regular en-
“tertainments should be prohibited in a city,
“which tolerates coarse and insipid drolls;
“contrary both to good sense, and good
“manners. Further; by degrees the ex-
“ample of the comedians of Geneva, the
“regularity of their behaviour, and the
“esteem

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“ esteem in which they were held by the
 “ inhabitants of this city, would serve for
 “ a pattern to the comedians of other na-
 “ tions, and a lesson to those who have
 “ hitherto treated them with such absurd
 “ rigour. No longer would they, on the
 “ one hand, receive a salary from the go-
 “ vernment, and, on the other, be subject
 “ to ecclesiastic censure: our priests would
 “ cease to excommunicate them; and our
 “ citizens to look upon them with an eye
 “ of contempt: so that a petty republic
 “ would have the glory of reforming Eu-
 “ rope in an article of much greater im-
 “ portance, than perhaps is generally ima-
 “ gined.”

Surely this is one of the most agreeable and most tempting pictures that could be exhibited to our view: but at the same time it is the most pernicious advice that could possibly be given us. At least I think so, and my reasons are couched in the following discourse. Will not the authority of so great a writer determine the youth of Geneva to run after a profession for which they have but too natural a bent, and thus to give full loose to their desire? Since the publication of this volume, do not a great many of our young people, in other respects very
 good

good citizens, wait for the favourable moment of erecting a theatre, imagining thereby they shall do service to their country, and to mankind? This is the subject of my fears, this the mischief I would fain prevent. I must do justice to M. D'Alembert's intentions, and I hope he will be equally just to mine; I have no more inclination to affront him, than he to injure us. But, after all, were I even mistaken, ought not I to act and to speak according to my conscience, and to the best of my knowledge? Ought I to hold my tongue? Or can I do it without betraying my duty and my country?

To have an excuse for being silent on this occasion, I should not have written on less necessary subjects. That sweet obscurity, in which I enjoyed myself full thirty years, ought ever to have been my delight: it should not be known that I had any connection with the editors of the Encyclopedia; that I furnished some articles to that work; that my name is mentioned among the rest of the authors: in short, my love for my country should be less public than it is, to suppose that the article of Geneva could escape me, or not to have a right to infer from my silence that I approve of the contents. As nothing of all this is true, I must therefore speak;
I must

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I must disown what I do not approve, lest I should be charged with opinions I do not hold: My countrymen do not want my advice, I know it well; but for my own part, I aim at honour, in shewing that I agree with them in principles.

I am not ignorant how far short this essay is of what it ought to be, short even of what I could have made it in my happier days. Such a number of circumstances have concurred to reduce it even below the mediocrity I could formerly attain to, that I am surprized it is not a great deal worse. I was writing in defence of my country: could zeal supply the place of abilities, I should have written better than ever; but I saw what was to be done, and found myself unequal to the task. I have told the plain truth: but who troubles his head about that? Sad way of recommending a book! In order to be useful, it should be agreeable; and this is an art I have lost. Some perhaps will be so malicious as to dispute this loss with me: be it so: yet I feel myself sinking; and no man can sink lower than nothing.

In the first place, the matter in debate is not a speculative point of philosophy, but a practical truth of great importance to a whole nation. Neither am I addressing myself to
a
a few,

a few, but to the public; nor is my aim to make others think, but to explain my thoughts with perspicuity. I was therefore obliged to change my stile: in order to make myself understood by all the world; I have expressed fewer things in more words; and willing to be easy and intelligible, I became too copious and diffuse.

At first I reckoned to print but a sheet or two at the most; I undertook the work in a hurry; but the matter increasing upon my hands, I gave full scope to my imagination. I was ill and low spirited; and though I stood in great need of: something to divert my thoughts, I found myself so little capable to write; that if the notion of discharging my duty had not supported me, I should have been tempted a hundred times to throw these papers into the flames. Thus I grew less severe upon myself. My aim was amusement, without which I could not have undergone the fatigue of this essay. I have fallen into every digression that came in my way, without considering, that, while I consulted my own ease, little did I mind how tiresome I should grow to the reader.

Taste, judgment, correction, are not to be expected in this work. As I live retired, I could shew it to no body. I had once
a severe,

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all severe, and judicious Aristarchus: he is no more, and I want no other (a): but I shall for ever lament his death, which was a far greater loss to my heart, than to my writings. Solitude calms the soul, and asswages those passions, which arise from the hurry and tumult of the world. Remote from the provocation of vice, we speak of it with less indignation: remote from the evils that affect us, we have less sensibility of heart. Since I no longer converse with mankind, I have almost ceased to detest the wicked. Besides, the ill they have done me, deprives me of all right to say any harm of them: henceforward must I forgive them, that there may be no resemblance between us. I should substitute, unknown to me, the love of revenge to that of justice: but it is much better to forget every thing. I hope I have no more of that acrimony, with which I have been charged, even by those who found it pleasing: I am content to have fewer readers, provided I live in peace,

(a) Ad amicum etsi produxerit gladium, non desperes; est enim regressus ad amicum. Si aperueris os triste, non timeas, est enim concordatio: excepto convitio, et improprio, et superbia, et mysterii revelatione, et plagâ dolosâ. In his omnibus effugiet amicus. Ecclesiastic. xxii. 26, 27.

Beside

Beside these reasons, there is another still more disagreeable, which it would be in vain for me to dissemble; the public would know it in spite of me. If among the several performances that have dropped from my pen, the following essay should happen to fall greatly short of all the rest, I must not say it is owing to circumstances, but rather to my own fault; because I am sunk beneath myself. Bodily evils exhaust the soul; by long sufferings it loses its spring and vigour. Short was the fermentation which produced in me some glimmering of abilities; it appeared late in life, and was quickly extinguished. Returning to my natural state, I returned to nothing. I had only a moment's existence; it is gone; and I am ashamed to survive myself. Reader, if thou receivest this last piece with indulgence, thou receivest my shade: as for me, I am no more.

Montmorenci, the 20th of March 1758.

J. J. Rous-

J. J. ROUSSEAU,

Citizen of GENEVA.

TO

M. D'ALEMBERT,

SIR,

WITH pleasure I have perused your article of *Geneva*, in the seventh volume of the *Encyclopedia*. With greater pleasure still I have given it a second perusal; and this has occasioned a few strictures, which I may venture, under your auspices, to lay before my fellow citizens, and the public. There are a great many good things in that article; but if the encomiums with which you have honoured my country, prevent me from returning you the compliment, my sincerity must be accepted as an excuse: to differ from you in opinion with regard to some points, sufficiently explains my mind concerning the rest. I shall begin with a question which, as it is not properly within my province, I am least inclined to examine; but on which, for the reason now mentioned, I am not permitted to be silent. It is the judgment you pass on the doctrine of our ministers in matters of faith. You have given a very high, and very just elogium to that respectable

spectable body, an elogium which still lays them under a greater obligation to you, and which suits them only of all the clergy of the universe; by shewing that they are fond of learned researches, and do not dread a philosophic eye. But, Sir, when we pay our respects to men, we should do it in their way, and not our own; lest they should have just reason to be offended with such commendations, which, though given with a good intention, are injurious nevertheless to the character, to the interests, to the opinions, or prejudices of the persons commended. Can you be ignorant that the name of sectary is ever odious, and that the like imputations are often of bad consequence even to laymen, and always to divines?

You will tell me that the point in question is concerning facts, and not encomiums; and that a philosopher pays more regard to truth than to persons: but this pretended truth is not so clear, nor of so indifferent a nature, that you should be intitled to broach it without very good authority; and I do not see where any such can be had, to prove that the sentiments publickly held by a body of men, as the rule of their conduct, are not genuine. You will say further, that you do not attribute these sentiments to the whole body of the clergy, but to many; and many surely in a small number make so considerable a part, as the whole must be affected.

According to you, many of the clergy of Geneva are downright Socinians. This you declare in the face of all Europe. But I should be glad

to know where you got this intelligence? It must have been either from your own conjectures, or from the information of a third person, or from the confession of the very clergy in question.

Now in matters of mere doctrine, and which are no way connected with morality, how is it possible to judge of another man's faith by conjecture? How is it possible even to judge of it from the declaration of a third, contrary to that of the person concerned? Who can tell better than myself, what I do, or do not, believe? and who is to be depended upon in this matter more than myself? Should a fiery priest first draw sophistical and disavowed consequences from the discourses or writings of a worthy man, and afterwards persecute the author for those same consequences, the priest acts in character, and nobody is surprized: but are we to do honour to worthy men in the same manner as a knave persecutes them? and shall the philosopher imitate those capricious arguments to which he has so often fallen a victim?

One would therefore think, that those clergy who according to you are Socinians, and reject the eternity of hell torments, had declared their opinions to you in confidence: but were these their opinions, and had they entrusted you with them, surely they would have done it privately, and with the freedom usual in philosophical conferences; they would have mentioned them to the philosopher, and not to the author. But they have mentioned no such thing; and of this

your having published them, is an undeniable proof.

Far am I, however, from pretending either to judge of or to blame the doctrine you impute to them: all I say is, that you have no right to charge them with it, unless they profess it themselves. I know not what Socinianism is, so that I can say neither good nor ill of it; though from some confused notions I have of that sect and its founder, I feel a greater aversion than liking to it: but upon the whole, I am a friend to every peaceable religion, in which the Supreme is served according to that portion of reason which he has given to his creatures. When a man cannot believe what he finds absurd, it is not his fault, but that of his reason or understanding (a); and how

(a) I think I have found a principle, which, if fully demonstrated, as it may be, would instantly disarm persecution and superstition, and assuage that fury for making profelytes, which seems to animate the ignorant. It is that human reason hath no common determinate measure, and that it is very wrong for any man to lay down his own sense of things as a rule for others.

Let us suppose the disputants to be sincere; otherwise all they say is idle prate. So far as a certain point there are common principles, and common evidence; and besides, each man has his own reason to determine him; therefore this opinion does not lead to Scepticism: but, on the other hand, as the general limits of reason are not fixed, and no man has a power or controll over the understanding of another person, the proud dogmatist must be stopped short. If ever peace could be established where interest, pride, and ambition reign at present, the quarrels

how can I conceive that God should punish him for not having framed an understanding (a) for himself,

of priests and philosophers, would have an end. But perhaps neither party would find their account in this; there would be no more persecutions, no more disputes; the former would have nobody to torment, and the latter none to convince; so that their business would be worth nothing.

Suppose a person should ask me, Why do I dispute myself? My answer would be, that I am addressing my discourse to the public, that I am explaining practical truths, that I build my notions on experience, that I fulfill my duty, and that after having said what I think, I do not find fault with any man for being of a different opinion.

(a) The reader must take notice, that here I am answering an author, who is not a Protestant; and I think I answer him effectually, by shewing, that what he charges the ministers of our religion with doing, would be to no manner of purpose, and is what must be inadvertently done in several other religions.

The intellectual world, not even excepting geometry, is full of incomprehensible, and yet undeniable truths; because though reason demonstrates their existence, yet it cannot penetrate beyond its boundaries, (if so I may speak) to reach them, but can only perceive them at a distance. Such is the doctrine of the existence of a Deity; such are the mysteries admitted in Protestant communions. Those mysteries which offend reason, (to express myself in M. D'Alembert's terms) are quite a different thing. Even their contradiction brings them within reason's reach; we have all the foundation in the world to conclude that they do not exist; for though we cannot see an absurd thing, yet nothing is easier than to see an absurdity. This is the case whenever two contradictory propositions are maintained. If you tell me that an inch is as long as a foot, you do not tell an obscure, incomprehensible mystery; but a palpable absurdity, a pro-

position

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himself, contrary to that which he received from the divine hands? Should a doctor come and command me in God's name to believe that the part is greater than the whole, what could I think within myself, but that this man wanted to make a fool of me? No doubt but the orthodox Christian, who sees no absurdity in the mysteries of religion, is obliged to believe them: but if the Socinian finds them to be nonsense, what can we say to him? Shall we attempt to convince him that they are not nonsense? He then will begin to demonstrate to you, that it is nonsense to reason on what we cannot understand. What then is to be done? Let him alone.

Neither am I more offended, that they who serve a merciful God, should reject the eternity of hell torments, if they find it inconsistent with his justice. In that case, let them interpret the passages contrary to their opinion, as well as they can, rather than give it up: for what else can they do? No man has a greater love and respect

position evidently false. Let the proofs in its favour be what they will, they cannot be stronger than the demonstration brought against it, because this flows immediately from the original notions on which all human certainty is founded. Otherwise reason, deposing against itself, would oblige me to reject its authority, and far from making us believe this or that, it would prevent our believing any thing at all, because all principle of faith would be subverted. Every man therefore, of what religion soever, who says he believes in such mysteries, either imposes upon his hearers, or knows not what he says.

for

for the sublimest of all books than myself; it affords me daily comfort and instruction, when I have a dislike to other reading. Yet I maintain, that even if the Scriptures themselves were to give you an idea unworthy of the Divine Majesty, you ought to reject it in this particular, as in geometry you would reject demonstrations that conclude an absurdity: for whatever may be the authenticity of the sacred text, still it is more credible that the Bible should be corrupted, than that the Deity should be unjust or malevolent.

These, Sir, are the reasons which would hinder me from censuring any candid and modest divines for maintaining those opinions, if at the same time they professed the doctrine of obliging nobody to be of their way of thinking. I shall go further; sentiments so agreeable to a rational, but infirm creature, so worthy of a just and merciful Creator, in my apprehension appear far preferable to that stupid notion, which transforms man into a brute, and to that barbarous persecution, which delights with torturing, even in this life, those whom it devotes to eternal torments in the next. In this sense, I return you thanks, in my country's name, for acknowledging that spirit of philosophy and toleration in her clergy, and for the justice you have done this venerable body: upon this article I join issue with you. But from their being endued with this spirit of toleration (a)

and
(a) In regard to Christian toleration, the reader may consult a chapter bearing this title, in the eleventh book of the Christian Doctrine, by professor Vernet. There he

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and philosophy, does it follow that her members are heretics? In regard to the name of sectaries with which you distinguish them, and the doctrines which you lay to their charge, I can neither follow, nor approve of your opinion. Though there may be nothing in this system, but what does honour to such as adopt it, yet I shall take care not to attribute it to our clergy, by whom it has not been openly acknowledged; lest the elogium I make them on this occasion, should furnish others with an opportunity of decrying them; and upon the whole prove detrimental to those whom I intended to commend. Why should I answer for other men's profession of faith? Have not I had experience enough to be afraid of these rash imputations? Are not there many, who have undertaken to answer for mine, by accusing me of irreligion, who surely never looked into my breast? I shall not recriminate upon them; for one of the duties of religion is to have a regard to the secrets of hearts. Let us judge only of the actions of men, but leave it to God to judge of their faith.

So much, and perhaps, too much, concerning a point, the discussion of which does not belong to me, nor indeed is the subject of this letter. The ministers of Geneva do not stand in need of

will see the reasons for which the church ought to act with greater caution in censuring errors against faith, than immorality, and how in framing this censure, Christian moderation, philosophic reason, and pastoral zeal, may be all united.

an able pen to defend their cause (*a*); neither is it me they would chuse for their champion; besides, disquisitions of this kind are too remote from my studies, to pursue them with any pleasure: but as I had occasion to mention the same article, where you charge them with opinions, which we do not know they hold; to have been silent on this charge, would seem as if I gave credit to it, which I am far from doing. Sensible of our happiness in possessing a body of philosophic and peaceful divines, or rather a corps of officers of morality (*b*) and ministers of virtue, I am shocked whenever there is an occasion for them to degrade themselves, so as to be nothing more than mere priests. It behoves us to preserve them in their

(*a*) This is what they have done, as I am informed, by a public declaration. In my present retreat I have not as yet had a sight of it, but I hear that the public received it with applause. So that I have not only the pleasure of being the first who paid them the honour they deserve, but moreover that of hearing an unanimous approbation of my opinion. I am sensible indeed, that this declaration renders my letter entirely superfluous, and perhaps in any other case it might be looked upon as indiscreet; but as I was going to suppress it, I found, that mentioning the article which gave occasion to it, the same reason still subsisted; and that my silence might still be construed into a kind of consent. I have therefore suffered these reflections to stand, and so much the more willingly, as though they may seem unreasonable, the affair being happily terminated, still they contain nothing in the whole but what does honour to the church of Geneva, and may be of service to mankind in general.

(*b*) This is the name that the Abbé de St. Pierre always gave to the clergy, either to signify that they are really such, or that they ought to be such.

present

present state. It behoves us to let them enjoy the peace they so strongly recommend to us, and to take care, that neither their repose nor ours be disturbed by odious disputes of divinity. It behoves us, in short, to learn always by their instruction and example, that moderation and humanity are also Christian virtues.

I proceed now to a question less grave and important, but which concerns us also enough to merit our reflections, and into which I shall descend the more willingly, as it is somewhat more within my province; this is the project for erecting a theatre at Geneva. I shall not give you my conjectures about the motives, which might have determined you to recommend to us an establishment so contrary to our standing polity. Whatever may have been your reasons, I have only to do with ours; and all that I shall take the liberty to say in regard to yourself is, that surely you are the first philosopher (a) that ever encouraged a free people in a small city, and in a poor state, to encumber themselves with a public spectacle.

What a number of questions arise from that one which you seem to resolve! Whether plays are good or bad in themselves? Whether they are

(a) Of two celebrated historians, both philosophers, and both dear to M. D'Alembert, the modern perhaps would be of his opinion; but Tacitus, whom he is fond of, whom he studies, whom he thinks proper to translate, the grave Tacitus, whom he quotes so frequently, and whom he sometimes imitates so well in every thing but his obscurity, would Tacitus, I say, be of his opinion?

consistent with morality? Whether with the austerity of a republic? Whether they ought to be tolerated in a small city? Whether the profession of a comedian may be honourable? Whether an actress may be as virtuous as other women? Whether good laws are sufficient to check abuses? Whether these laws can be observed? &c. The real effects of the stage are all as yet problematical, for this reason, that as the disputes which they occasion, are only between the clergy and the laity, each side views them through the medium of their prejudices. These, Sir, are researches not unworthy of your pen. For my part, without thinking myself able to engage in so arduous a province, I shall be content with enquiring after those further explications which you have rendered necessary; and I beg you will consider, that in giving my opinion as you have done, I discharge my duty to my country, and that if I am mistaken, no man can be hurt by my error.

The first enquiry I make into these institutions, instantly shews me that plays are designed to amuse: and if it be true that mankind must have amusements, you will allow at least that they are lawful, no farther than as they are necessary; and that every useless entertainment is an evil, especially to a short-lived being, whose time is so precious. Man has pleasures founded in his nature, in his occupations, his relations, his wants; and these being more exquisite in proportion to the virtue and innocence of the persons who taste them, render those persons almost insensible to other enjoy-

enjoyments. A father, a son, a husband, a citizen, have duties of so tender a nature, that it is employment enough to discharge them. A right use of time enhances its value, and the better it is employed, the less we have to spare. Thus we ever find that the habit of labour renders inaction tiresome, and that a good conscience extinguishes all taste for idle pleasures (a): but it is discontent, it is laziness, it is the neglect of simple and natural pleasures, that occasion the necessity of artificial amusements. I do not like to see people's attention entirely taken up by the stage; it looks as if they could find no employment within themselves. It was nature itself that dictated the answer of that barbarian, to a person who had been extolling the magnificence of the circus, and of the games established at Rome. Have the Romans (said the good man) no wives nor children? The barbarian was in the right. We imagine ourselves to be in company at the theatre; whereas there every body is alone: thither we go to forget our friends, our relations, our neighbours, only to concern ourselves in fabulous representations, to lament the misfortunes of the dead, or to laugh at the living. But I should have remembered, that this is no longer the language of our times; I shall therefore explain myself in another, which will be better understood.

To ask whether public entertainments are good or bad in themselves, is too vague a question; it is examining a relation before we have ascertained the

(a) Chrysost. in Matth. Hom. 38.
terms.

terms. Public entertainments are made for the people, and it is only by their effects on them that we can determine their absolute qualities. There may be an infinite variety of these entertainments (a), as there is an infinite variety of manners, constitutions, and characters in different nations. Nature is the same I allow; but nature modified by religion, government, law, customs, prejudices, and climates, becomes so different from itself, that we must no longer enquire for what is suitable to man in general, but what is proper for him in such a place or country. Hence Me-

(a) "There may be public entertainments that are bad in themselves, as those which are cruel, indecent, or licentious: such were some of the games of the Pagans. But there are others indifferent in their nature, and which become vicious only by the abuse made of them. For instance, plays have nothing bad in themselves, so far as they represent the different characters and actions of mankind; they might even be rendered not only agreeable, but instructive to people of all conditions: yet if they contain a corrupt morality, if the persons who exercise this profession lead a debauched life, and contribute to debauch others; if such entertainments encourage vanity, idleness, luxury, incontinency, it is plain then that they tend to a bad purpose, and that unless we can find a way to correct or to guard against this abuse, we had better renounce such kind of entertainment." *Christ. Instruct. 1. 3. l. 3. c. 16.*

Here we see the right state of the question. The point is to know whether the morality of the stage is necessarily corrupted; whether the abuses are inevitable; whether the inconveniencies arise from the nature of the thing, or from causes which it is possible to remove.

nander's plays, which had been written for the Athenian stage, did not at all suit that of Rome; hence the shows of gladiators, which in the times of the republic used to inspire the Romans with courage, had no other effect, under the emperors than to make those very Romans ferocious and cruel: from the same spectacle exhibited at different times, the people learned at first to undervalue their own lives, and afterwards to sport with those of others.

With regard to the species of public entertainments, this must be determined by the pleasure they afford, and not by their utility. If there is any utility to be obtained by them, well and good: but the chief intent is to please; and provided the people are amused, this view is fulfilled. This alone will ever hinder these institutions from having all the advantages of which they are susceptible; and they must be greatly mistaken, who form an idea of perfection, which cannot be reduced to practice, without offending those whom we would willingly instruct. Hence ariseth the difference of entertainments according to the different character of nations. A people of an intrepid spirit, but determined and cruel, will have spectacles full of danger, where valour and resolution are most conspicuous. A hot fiery people are for bloodshed, for battles, for the indulging of sanguinary passions. A voluptuous nation wants music and dancing. A polite people require love and gallantry. A trifling people are for mirth and ridicule. *Trabit sua quemque voluptas.* To please all these, the entertainments must encourage,

rage, whereas in right reason they ought to moderate, their affections.

The stage in general is a picture of the human passions, the original of which is imprinted in every heart: but if the painter did not take care to flatter these passions, the spectators would soon be offended, not chusing to see their faces in such a light as must render them contemptible to themselves. And if he draws some in odious colours, it is only such as cannot be called general, and are naturally hated. Thus the author so far does no more than follow the opinion of the public; and then these odious passions are always employed to set off others, though not more lawful, yet more agreeable to the spectators. Reason alone is of no use upon the stage. A man without passions, or that has them absolutely under his command, would engage nobody in his favour; and it has been observed, that the character of a Stoic in tragedy would be intolerable; in comedy, at the most would make you laugh.

Let us not then attribute to the stage a power of changing opinions or manners, when it has only that of following or heightening them. An author, who offends the general taste, may as well cease to write, for nobody will read his works. When Moliere reformed the stage, he attacked modes and ridiculous customs; but he did not affront the public taste (a), he either followed or explained

(a) Had Moliere appeared a little earlier, even this great poet would have found it very difficult to maintain his ground; the completest of all his works died at its very birth, because

explained it, as Corneille did also on his part. It was the ancient French theatre that began to offend this taste; for though the age improved in politeness, the stage still preserved its primitive rudeness. Hence the general taste having changed since those two authors, if both their master-pieces were still to make their first appearance, they would certainly be damned. Nor does it signify that they are yet admired by connoisseurs; if the public still admires them, it is rather through shame of retracting, than from any real sense of their beauties. It is said that a good play will never miscarry; indeed I believe it: and this is because a good play never runs counter to the manners (a) of the present cause it was acted too soon, and the public were not yet ripe for the *Misanthrope*.

The whole of this is founded on an evident maxim, namely, that a nation frequently followeth customs which it despises, or is ready to despise, as soon as a person starts up that has the courage to set the example. When the folly of the *Pantins* was acted in my time, the comedians did no more than express on the stage what they themselves thought, who spent the whole day in this foolish amusement: but the settled inclinations, customs, and prejudices of a nation ought always to be respected on the stage. Never did any poet find his account in violating this law.

(a) I make use of the words *taste* or *manners* indifferently: for though these are not the same things, yet they have ever a common original, and are subject to the same revolutions. This by no means imports, that good taste and good manners obtain always at the same time, a proposition which merits some discussion; but that a certain degree of taste always corresponds to a certain degree of manners, which is incontestable.

time,

time. Who can have the least doubt, but that the very best tragedy of Sophocles would be hissed off our modern stage? We cannot put ourselves in the place of people with whom we have not the least resemblance.

Every author who attempts to represent foreign manners, takes great care however to accommodate himself to ours. Without this precaution it is impossible for him to succeed; and even the success of such as have used it, depends frequently on causes different from those supposed by a superficial observer. When *Harlequin Sauvage* meets with so favourable a reception, is it to be imagined that this proceeds from the liking which the spectators have for the simplicity of his character, or that any one of them all would be glad to resemble him? Far from it; the reason is, because this play humours their turn of mind, which is to be fond of novelties. Now there are no greater novelties to them, than those of nature. It is the very aversion they have to things common and usual, that sometimes makes them return to things the most simple.

From the first of these observations it follows, that the general effect of a play, is to heighten the national character, to strengthen the natural inclinations, and to give a new vigour to the passions. In this sense one would imagine, that as this effect consists in heightening, and not in changing the established manners, the comic muse would have a good effect upon the good, and an ill one upon the vicious. Even in the first case the point

would still be to know, whether when the passions are too much irritated, they do not degenerate into vices. I am not ignorant that the poetic art, so far as it regards the theatre, pretends to a contrary effect; and to purge while it excites the passions: but I have great difficulty to understand this rule. Is it that to grow temperate and wise, we should begin with being intemperate and mad?

“Not at all! it is not that, say the defenders of the stage. Tragedy indeed pretends, that the several passions should move us; but it does not always require, that we should have the same feeling, as a man really tormented by a passion. On the contrary, its aim more frequently is to excite quite different sentiments from those, with which it inspires its heroes.” They tell us further, that if poets abuse the power of moving the passions, in order to engage us in favour of a bad character, this mistake ought to be attributed to ignorance, or to the depravity of the artist, not to the art. They tell us, lastly, that a faithful representation of the passions, and of the anxieties attending them, is alone sufficient to make us avoid this rock with all possible care.

To be convinced of the insincerity of these answers, we need only to consult our own breasts at the end of a tragedy. Can the concern, the pain, the pity we feel during the play, and which continue some time after it is over, can these be said to be the forerunners of a disposition to regulate and subdue our passions? Those lively
impress-

impressions, which by frequent repetition must needs grow habitual, are they proper to moderate our affections? Why should the idea of pain arising from the passions, efface the remembrance of joys which also flow from the same source, and which the poet takes care to represent in lively colours, in order to embellish his play? Is it not well known that all the passions are sisters, that one only is sufficient to excite a thousand, and that to combat one by means of another, is the way to render the heart more sensible to them all? The instrument that serves to purge them is reason; and reason, I have already taken notice, has no effect upon the stage. It is true, we do not share the affections of all the characters; for as their interests are opposite, the poet must make us prefer some particular one to another, otherwise we should not be affected at all: but to attain this end, he is far from chusing the passion he likes himself; he is rather obliged to chuse that which is our favourite. What has been said of the species of plays, ought also to be understood of the interest by which they engage the audience. At London a lady interests the spectators in her favour, by making them hate the French. At Tunis the favourite passion would be piracy; at Messina, deep revenge; at Goa, the honour of committing Jews to the flames. Should an author (a) offend against these prejudices,

(a) For instance, let him represent upon the French stage a man, who is honest, but withal a simple clown, void of love and gallantry, and incapable of making fine

dices, he might write a very fine play, which nobody would go to see acted; and then he would be taxed with ignorance, for having failed in the first rule of his art, the basis and foundation of all the rest, which is to succeed. Thus the stage purges those passions we have not, and foment those we have. Is not this a fine way to administer a remedy?

There is then a concurrence of general and particular causes, which must hinder dramatic performances from attaining that high degree of perfection, of which they are susceptible, and from producing those good effects one might expect from such an entertainment. Were we even to suppose this perfection as great as can be, and the people as well disposed as you please, still these effects would signify nothing, for want of means to render them sensible. I know but of three sorts of means that can contribute to influence the manners of a people, namely, the force of laws, the authority of opinion, and the allurements of pleasure. Now laws have no access to the stage, where the least restraint (a) would

speeches; let him represent likewise a philosopher, free from prejudice, who after receiving an affront from a bully, does not think proper to have his throat cut by the offender; then let him exhaust the whole theatrical art to render these characters as interesting to the French nation as the Cid; I am much mistaken if he succeeds.

(a) The law may determine the subject, the form of the play, and the manner of acting; but it cannot compel the public to like the entertainment. When the emperor Nero

sang

be a pain and not an amusement. Nor does opinion depend on this entertainment, since the stage, instead of prescribing, receives laws from the public; and as for the pleasure that may be enjoyed in the representation, its whole effect is to carry us the oftener to the theatre.

Let us see whether there can be any other means. The stage, you will say, under a proper regulation, renders virtue amiable, and vice odious. Indeed! And was it not the same before there were plays? Was it not usual then to love honest men, and to detest knaves? and are these sentiments weaker where there are no theatrical entertainments? The stage renders virtue amiable! A great wonder truly, that it should do what nature and reason have done before it! Knaves are hated upon the stage;—Are they liked in society, when known to be such? Is it very certain, that this aversion is more the work of the author, than a consequence of the crimes which he makes them commit? Is it very certain, that the bare recital of those crimes would strike us with less horror, than the painting them in such lively colours? If his whole art consists in exhibiting malefactors to our view, in order to render them odious, I do not see any great beauty in this art; and there are but too many other lec-

sang upon the stage, he ordered those who nodded to be put to death; neither could he keep them all awake; and a short nap had like to have cost Vespasian his life. Ye excellent performers of the opera at Paris, O! if you had been but invested with Imperial authority, I should not complain at present of having lived too long!

tures in life, without having recourse to this. Shall I venture to add a surmise which comes into my head? I question whether any man whatever, upon hearing a plain narrative of the crimes of Phædra and Medea, before he went to the play, would not detest them much more at the beginning, than at the end of the representation; and if this question be well founded, what shall we think of the so much boasted effect of the stage?

I should be glad to see any body that could demonstrate to me clearly, and without a parade of words, how it was possible for him to raise sentiments in my breast, which I had not felt before, and to make me judge of moral entities, otherwise than as I judge of them within myself? How puerile and senseless are all these prétensions? Alas! if the beauty of virtue was the work of art, it would have been long ago disfigured! For my part, were I to be still treated as a knave for daring to maintain that mankind are born virtuous, I think and believe I have proved it: the source of that affection which attaches us to virtue, and inspires us with aversion to vice, is within ourselves, and not in the play. Art cannot produce, it can only employ, this affection. The love of beauty (a) is a passion as natural to the

(a) I speak here of moral beauty; let philosophers say what they will, this love is implanted in man, and serves for a rule of conscience. I might quote here as an example the little entertainment called Nanine, which has made the audience grumble, and supported itself merely by the

the human breast as self-love; it does not spring from an arrangement of the scenes; the author dares not carry it thither, he finds it there; and by flattering that pure passion, he draws those melting tears from the audience.

Imagine a comedy as perfect as you please: Where is the man, that upon going to see it the first time, is not already convinced of what is proved there, and already prejudiced in favour of those who are represented in an amiable light? But this is not the point in question; it is to act up to our principles, and to follow the example of those whom we esteem. Man has always an honest heart in whatever does not personally relate to himself. In quarrels where we are barely spectators, instantly we espouse the cause of justice; and at every knavish act we conceive the highest indignation, so long as we derive no benefit from it ourselves: but as soon as we find our interest concerned, our sentiments begin to change; and then it is, but then only, that we prefer the evil which redounds to our profit, to that good which we naturally love. Is it not a necessary effect of the constitution of things, that a knave shall derive a double advantage, one from his own injustice, and the other from another man's honesty? Is it possible for him to make a better bargain, than to oblige all the world to be honest, except himself; so that every man

the great reputation of the author, and this because honour, virtue, and the pure sentiments of nature are preferred to the impertinent prejudice of ranks and conditions.

shall behave towards him with strict justice, but he himself shall do justice to no man? He is in love with virtue, there is no manner of doubt, but it is with his neighbour's virtue, because he hopes to benefit by it; he does not chuse to have any himself, because it would be expensive. What is it then that he goes to see at the theatre? The very thing which he would be glad to find every where; virtuous lessons to the public, out of which number he excepts himself; and people sacrificing every consideration to their duty, while from him no duty is to be expected.

Some will say that tragedy excites the audience to pity by means of terror: be it so; but what sort of pity is this? A fleeting concern, which lasts no longer than the illusion that gave it birth; a remnant of natural tenderness, quickly stifled by the passions; in short, a barren pity, fed with a few tears, and never productive of the least act of humanity. Thus did the bloody Sylla weep at misfortunes, of which he himself was not the cause. Thus did the tyrant of Pheræ hide himself at the play, lest he should be seen to sigh with Andromache and Priamus, while he felt not the least concern at the cries of so many unfortunates, who were every day butchered by his orders.

○ If it be true what Diogenes Laertius observes, that the human breast is more affected with imaginary than with real evils; if the representations of the stage will sometimes command a greater stream of tears from the audience, than perhaps they would shed at the sight of the real object;

It is not so much, as the Abbé du Bos imagines, that the concern is weaker, and does not rise to be grief (*a*), but because it is pure, and without any alloy of inquietude. By shedding tears at those representations, we discharge all the duties of humanity, without any other inconveniency: but real miseries require something more; namely, to assist, to console, to ease the unfortunate, which would be making us share in their afflictions, and at least involve us in troubles, from which, through our natural indolence, we would willingly be exempt. It may be said, that we are narrow hearted, for fear of the expence with which pity is attended.

Upon the whole, when a man goes to admire the great exploits of fabulous heroes, and to weep over imaginary woes, what can we expect more from him? Is not he content with himself? Does not he boast of his compassionate disposition? Does not he discharge every duty he owes to virtue, by honouring it on the stage? What would you have him do more? For him to practise it himself? By no means: he has no part to act; he is no player.

(*a*) This author says, that the poet makes us grieve, only just to what degree we please; and that he makes us fall in love with his heroes, just so far as we please. This is contrary to experience. A great many people forbear going to a tragedy, because it affects them so deeply, as to be inconvenient; others, ashamed of weeping at a play, shed tears nevertheless in spite of them; and these effects are too frequent, to be no more than an exception to this author's principle.

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The more I reflect on this subject, the more I am convinced, that whatever is represented on the stage, instead of being brought nearer to our times, is removed to a greater distance. When I see the Earl of Essex; Q. Elizabeth, in my apprehension, is thrown ten centuries back: and were I to see the representation of an event that happened yesterday at Paris, I should suppose it to have been transacted in Moliere's time. The stage has its rules, its maxims, its morals, as well as its language and dress. We say to ourselves, this will not do for us; and we should think ourselves as ridiculous to adopt the virtues of theatrical heroes, as to talk in verse, or to strut in a Roman habit. You see then the use of all those grand sentiments, and those brilliant maxims that are extolled with such emphasis; they serve only for the stage, and to represent virtue as a theatrical puppet, proper enough to amuse the public, but too foolish a thing to be seriously introduced into society. Thus the happiest impression of the very best tragedies, is to reduce all the duties of humanity to a few barren affections; to make us extol our courage by commending that of others, our humanity by bewailing the miseries which we might relieve, and our charity by saying to a poor man, God bless you.

The stage, it is true, might wear a plainer dress, and the theatrical tone in comedy might be levelled to that of real life: however, manners are not corrected thus, but painted; and deformity does not appear hideous to an ugly fellow.

fellow.—If we would correct them by a caricatura, we quit probability, and the picture is of no effect. A caricatura does not render objects odious, but ridiculous; and hence ariseth a very great inconveniency, that through fear of falling into ridicule, vice no longer strikes us with horror, and we cannot cure the former without encouraging the latter. Why, you will say to me, should this opposition be supposed? Why, Sir? because honest men never deride knaves, but hold them in contempt; and nothing is less pleasant and risible than indignant virtue. On the contrary, ridicule is the favourite weapon of vice. It is with this it attacks the reverence due to virtue, till at length all sense thereof is extinguished in the human breast.

Thus we are obliged to give up that empty idea of perfection, which they would fain attribute to plays, as directed towards the public utility. It is a mistake, says a grave writer (a), to expect they should shew us the true relations of things: for in general, the poet only wants to alter these relations, in order to adapt them to the public taste. In comedy he deals in miniature, and sinks below nature; in tragedy, he swells to heroism, and rises above humanity. Thus they are never in proportion, and we always meet with beings on the stage that bear no resemblance to ourselves. Again; so real and so certain is this difference, that Aristotle makes a rule of it in his art of poetry: *Comedia enim*

(a) Muralt.

deteriores, tragædia meliores quam nunc sunt, imitari conantur. Is not this an excellent imitation, which proposeth for its object that which has no existence, and leaveth that which really exists, namely, the medium between want and excess, as a thing of no manner of use? But what signifies it whether the object of imitation be real, provided the deception succeeds? The main point is to excite the curiosity of the public. These productions of wit and genius, like most others, aim at nothing more than applause. When the author meets with this, and the actors have had their share, the intent of the play is fulfilled, and no other advantage is required. Now if there is no good, there is harm; and as of this there can be no doubt, the question to me appears to be decided: but let us proceed to a few examples, which will set this matter in a clearer light.

In consequence of the preceding truths, I will venture to advance another, which may be easily proved, that the French stage, with all its faults, is nearly as perfect as can be, either in regard to pleasure, or improvement; and that these two advantages are mixed in such proportion, as they cannot be altered without depriving the one of more than would be given to the other, which would render this stage still less perfect. Not but that a man of genius may invent a species of drama preferable to that which now obtains: but as this new species would stand in need of the abilities of the author to support itself, of course it would die with him; and those who came after him,
being

being destitute of the same resources, would be obliged to have recourse to the common expedients of engaging the audience. And what are these expedients? Great exploits, illustrious names, horrid crimes, and sublime virtues in tragedy; drollery and ridicule in comedy; and love in both (a). I want to know what service all this can be to morals?

You will say, that by poetical justice vice is always punished, and virtue rewarded. But even granting this to be true, as most tragic subjects are only mere fables, or the invention of a poet's brain, they make no great impression on the spectators; by shewing that our aim is to instruct them, our design is frustrated. Again; these punishments and rewards operate by such unusual means, that the like is never expected to happen in the natural course of things. Last of all, I deny the fact. It is not, neither can it be, generally true: for this not being the aim to which the poets generally direct their plays, they must very seldom hit it, and very often it would be a bar to their success. Whether vice or virtue prevails, what does it signify, provided the characters are of so exalted a station as to strike the audience. Thus on the French stage, the most perfect beyond contradiction, or at least the most regular that ever existed, do we not

(a) The Greeks had no occasion to ground, and indeed they did not ground, the principal interest of tragedy in love. With us tragedy, not having the same resource, cannot do without this interest. The reason of this difference we shall shew hereafter.

behold the triumph of great villains, as well as of celebrated heroes; witness Catiline, Mahomet, Atreus, and a great many others.

I am sensible, that we must not always look upon the catastrophe, to judge of the moral effect of a tragedy, and that the intent is fulfilled, when the audience are more concerned to see virtue in distress, than vice triumphant; which does not hinder the pretended rule from being violated at that time. As there is nobody but would chuse to be rather a Britannicus than a Nero, I grant, that we ought to commend the play that represents their actions, though Britannicus falls. But from the same principle, what judgment shall we form of a tragedy, where, though the guilty meet with their just deserts, yet they are always represented in so favourable an aspect, that every body is engaged in their favour? Where Cato, the greatest of mortals, acts the part of a pedant? Where Cicero, the preserver of the republic, Cicero, the first that was honoured with, and the only one that merited the title of father of his country, is painted as a mean rhetor, as a dastardly coward; while the infamous Catiline, loaded with crimes which we dare not to name, and just upon the point of cutting the throats of all the magistrates, and of reducing Rome, his native country, to ashes, acts the part of a hero, and by his talents, his steadiness, his courage, conciliates the esteem of the spectators? I will grant you, if you desire it, that he was a man of resolution; but was he less for that the horrid villain? and ought the
atrocious

atrocious crimes of a public robber have the same colouring as the exploits of an hero? Where then is the moral of such a piece, except it be to encourage more Catilines, and to give to wicked knaves the reward of public esteem, due only to virtue? But such is the taste, which a dramatic poet is obliged to flatter; and such are the manners of a polite age. Learning, wit, and courage engross our admiration; and virtue, sweet, modest virtue, thou remainest unhonoured! Blind that we are, in the midst of such a gleam of light! Tools to foolish applause! shall we never learn how odious and contemptible that wretch is, who abuseth the genius and abilities given him by nature, to curse and plague mankind?

Atreus and Mahomet have not even the poor resource of the unravelling of the plot. The monster that acts the hero in each of those pieces, completes and quietly enjoys his villany; and one of them says in express terms, in the last verse of the play,

At length I reap the fruit of my misdeeds.

I am willing, indeed, to suppose, that when the spectators are dismissed with this beautiful maxim, they will not conclude from thence, that vice is rewarded with pleasure and enjoyment; but I would ask them, what improvement could they possibly receive from a play, where such a maxim was established?

With regard to Mahomet, the error of fixing the public admiration on the guilty, would be here so much the greater, as this character is
 painted

painted in different colours, had the poet not taken care to engage our respect and veneration for a second character; a respect capable of effacing, or at least of balancing, the terror and surprize inspired by Mahomet. The scene, especially, where they appear both together, is so artfully conducted, that Mahomet, without acting out of his sphere, or without losing the least jot of that superiority which properly belongs to him, is eclipsed merely by the good sense, intrepidity, and virtue of Zopirus (a). None but an author, thoroughly sensible of his own strength, could have dared to introduce two such interlocutors in the same scene. Indeed, I never heard this scene

(a) I remember I used to find more fire and elevation of thought, in the scene where Omar and Zopirus appear together, than in that of Mahomet: And this I took to be a fault. But upon reflection, I have altered my opinion. Omar, transported by fanaticism, ought to speak of his master with that enthusiastic zeal and admiration, which raises him above the condition of humanity. But Mahomet is not a fanatic; he is a knave, who knows there is no occasion to act the saint before Zopirus; and therefore endeavours to gain him by an affected confidence, and by motives of ambition. Therefore from the part which he has here to play, he must shine less than Omar; for this very reason, that he is in a higher station, and has a greater knowledge of mankind. All this he himself either says, or gives to understand, in that scene. It was, consequently, my own fault, if I did not perceive it; but this is the case with us minor authors. Attempting to censure the writings of our masters, we are so stupid as to mistake a thousand things for blemishes, which are beauties in the eye of men of judgment.

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In particular so much commended, as it seems to me to deserve; but, I know of none in the whole circle of French plays, that has greater strokes of a masterly hand, and where the sacred character of virtue has more sensibly the advantage over a sublime genius. Another consideration, which tends to justify this performance, is, that the intent of the poet is not merely to expose criminal actions, but those which are the consequence of fanaticism in particular; to the end that the people may take care to distinguish and to guard against them. Unfortunately, all care of that kind is not only useless, but frequently dangerous. Fanaticism is not an error; but a blind, a senseless fury, which reason can never keep within bounds. The only way to hinder it from spreading, is to restrain those who broach it. In vain is it to demonstrate to madmen, that they are deceived by their leaders; still they will be as eager as ever to follow them. Wherever fanaticism has been introduced, I see but one way to stop its progress; and that is, to combat it with its own weapons. Little does it avail, either to reason or to convince; you must lay aside philosophy, shut your books, take up the sword, and punish the knaves. Further, I am very much afraid, in regard to Mahomet, that his magnanimity will greatly diminish the atrociousness of his crimes in the eye of the spectator; and that a play of this stamp, acted before persons capable of chusing for themselves, would make more Mahomet's than Zopirus's. This however is certain, that examples of this sort are very little encouragement to virtue.

None of these excuses hath the foul Atreus; the horror which he inspires, is all thrown away; we learn nothing of him, but to shudder at his villany; and though he is great only in his fury, yet there is not in the whole play, one single character, capable of sharing the public attention with him; for, as to the whining Plifthenes, I know not how he came to be introduced into such a tragedy. There is no mention of love in Seneca's Atreus; and since the modern poet thought fit to imitate the ancient in every thing else, he ought to have done it also in this. Surely the audience must be of a very flexible disposition, to bear with scenes of love intermixed with those of Atreus.

Before I have done with this play, I cannot help observing one kind of merit in it, which to a great many may seem perhaps a fault. The character of Thyestes is, of all others on the French stage, that which perhaps comes nearest the taste of the ancients. Thyestes is neither a hero, nor a pattern of virtue; nor can it be said that he is a villain (*a*): he is a weak man, who engages our pity, because of his condition of humanity, and his unhappiness. I think that for this very reason, the sentiment he excites, is extremely affecting: for this man, in great measure, is like ourselves: whereas heroism being above our reach, rather dazzles the mind,

(*a*) The proof of this is, that we are interested in his favour. With regard to the fault for which he suffers, it is of ancient date, and too severely punished; and it is but a trifle to a theatrical villain, who is not deemed such unless he strikes us with horror.

than moves the passions. We could wish that our sublime authors would vouchsafe a little to descend from their high flights, and to excite our compassion, for the sufferings of plain humanity; lest, directing our pity only towards unfortunate heroes, we may come to be insensible to all compassion. The ancients had heroes, and yet they brought familiar characters on the stage; on the contrary, we introduce none but heroes, and have hardly any familiar characters. The ancients spoke of humanity in less florid a style; but they knew better than we how to practise it. One might apply to this purpose a passage out of Plutarch, which I cannot help transcribing. An old man at Athens was looking out for a place to sit down at the play, but could find none; when some young men, perceiving his uneasiness, beckoned to him at a distance: upon his approaching, they sat closer to one another, and made a jest of him. Thus the good old man went round, in great confusion, and still derided by the Athenian youth. The Spartan ambassadors seeing this, rose up immediately, and placed him honourably in the middle of them. This behaviour was observed by the whole company, and met with universal applause. *Alas!* said the old man with a tone of concern, *the Athenians know good behaviour, but the Lacedemonians practise it.* This is modern philosophy, and ancient manners.

To return to my subject. What do we learn from Phædra and Oedipus, but that man is not a

free agent, and that the deity punishes him for crimes which he compels him to commit? What do we learn from Medea, but that the fury of jealousy may render a mother most cruel and unnatural? And thus continuing to examine most of the French tragedies, you will find that they are remarkable for monsters, and horrid crimes; which may serve, if you will, to render the play engaging, and to exercise virtue; but are certainly dangerous, as they accustom the eye to shocking scenes, and to crimes which the audience ought not so much as to know or to think possible. Neither is it true that murder and parricide are always rendered odious. By the help of a few convenient suppositions, they become either lawful or excusable. We are inclinable to excuse Phædra, though guilty of incest, and shedding innocent blood. Syphax, poisoning his wife; the young Horatius, stabbing his sister; Agamemnon, sacrificing his daughter; Orestes, cutting his mother's throat; all these are interesting persons. Besides, the poet in order to make each of them speak in character, is obliged to put the most vile maxims and principles into the mouth of villains, clad in all the pomp of versification, and pronounced with a grave sententious tone, for the instruction of the audience.

If the Greeks bore with the like entertainments, it was because they represented some of their old stories, which in all ages had been current among the common people; and they had their reasons for continually reviving the remembrance of them, and for exposing some
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of the characters to the public aversion. But how can the same tragedy, stripped of the same motives and interest, find spectators amongst us, that are able to bear the shocking images it exhibits to their view, or the characters it brings on the stage? One kills his father, marries his mother, and discovers himself to be the brother of his own children. Another compels a son to murder his father. A third makes the father drink off the blood of his son. Who can help being shocked at the very idea of these horrid scenes, which have been introduced upon the French stage, to amuse the mildest and the humanest people upon earth! No --- I maintain it, and I appeal to the terror of my readers: the shows of the gladiators were not half so barbarous. It is true, that among them human blood was seen to flow; but they did not defile their imaginations with crimes repugnant to nature.

Luckily, the present taste of tragedy is so distant from our manner of life, and presents us with such monstrous and unnatural characters, that neither the example of their vices is contagious, nor that of their virtues instructing; and in proportion as it attempts least to instruct, it does least harm. But far otherwise is it with regard to comedy, where the manners have a more immediate relation to ours, and the characters bear a nearer resemblance to human nature. The whole of it is bad; the whole is of dangerous consequence to the audience; and as

even the diversion of comedy is founded on a vicious disposition of the human breast, it follows from this principle, that the more agreeable and complete this entertainment, the more prejudicial it is to manners: but not to repeat what has been said before of its nature, I shall be content with making an application of it here, and to cast an eye on French comedy.

Let us take it in its perfection, that is, at its first rise. It is agreed on all hands, and daily experience convinces us, that among the various writers of comedy, whose works are come down to us, Moliere deserves the preference; and yet who can deny that the plays of this very writer, whose abilities no man admires more than myself, are a school of vice and corruption, more dangerous than the very books where vice is professedly taught? His chief care is to turn goodness and simplicity into ridicule; and to represent the party, whose interest we are to espouse, as men of craft and deceit: his honest people are only honest in words; his knaves are such in their actions, and are often crowned with the most signal success: in short, applause is an honour seldom bestowed on persons of the greatest worth, but almost always on those of the deepest craft.

Examine this author's talent of ridicule, and you will find that vice is its instrument, and natural defects are its subject; that the malice of the one punisheth the simplicity of the other, and that fools are the victims of knaves: which, for being but

but too true in common life, ought not to be acted on the stage with an air of approbation, as if he encouraged knaves to punish the simplicity of honest men, under the name of folly.

Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.

Such is the general tendency of Moliere and all his imitators. The most that can be said of them is, that they sometimes ridicule vice, without making us fall in love with virtue: they resemble those people, says an ancient writer, who know how to snuff a lamp, but never fill it with oil.

Do but see in what manner this man, to indulge his vein of pleasantry, inverts the whole order of society; how scandalously he strikes at even the most sacred ties on which it is founded; how he derides the valuable rights of fathers over their children, of husbands over their wives, and of masters over their servants! He makes us laugh; it is true; but he only incurs a greater guilt, in compelling even philosophers themselves, by an invincible charm, to countenance such raillery as merits their indignation. I know it is said, that he combats vice; but I should be glad you would compare the vices he combats, to those he encourages. Which is the worst character of the two, a vain stupid citizen who acts the fine gentleman, or the knavish gentleman who defrauds him? And yet in the play we have been speaking of, is not the latter the chief character? does not he interest the audience in his favour? and does not the public applaud the several tricks he plays up-

on the other? Who is the most criminal, a peasant so foolish as to marry a young lady, or a wife who seeks to dishonour her marriage bed? What are we to think of a play, where the pit applauds the infidelity, the deceit, and the impudence of the latter, and laughs at the stupidity of the clown? I own it is a great vice to be avaricious, and to lend money out at usury; but is it not a much greater, for a son to rob his father, to behave disrespectfully to him, to reproach and insult him a thousand times; and when the father is so provoked as to give him his curse, to answer then with a sneer, that he will have nothing to do with his presents? If the jokes are pleasing, are they the less criminal? and if the play makes you fond of the son, who cracks those jokes, does this make it less a school of immorality?

I shall not spend time in examining his valets: they are condemned by all the world (a); and it would be unfair to charge Moliere with the errors of the times he lived in, or of those he imitates, since he corrected them himself. Let us not take advantage of the irregularities which we may find

(a) I will not take upon me to say, whether we ought really to condemn them. Perhaps the valets are now no more than tools to their wicked masters, since the latter have deprived them of the honour of invention. Yet I question, whether too natural a picture of society be proper for the stage. Suppose there was a necessity for some knavish tricks in a play, I doubt whether it would not be better that the valets only were charged with performing them; and that honest people should still be honest, at least upon the stage.

in his youthful pieces, nor of those passages which are less perfect in his other plays; but let us skip at once to that, which by all voices is allowed to be his master-piece, the *Misanthrope*.

I find that of all Moliere's comedies, this gives us the best insight into the design with which he wrote for the stage; and best enables us to judge of the real effects of his writings. As he had the public to please, he consulted the general taste of those who compose it: on this taste he formed a plan, and according to this he drew a sketch of contrary failings, from whence he took his characters, and interspersed the different parts among his plays. His intent, therefore, was not to draw an honest man, but a man of the world; consequently he did not want to correct vice, but folly; and as I observed already, he found vice a proper instrument for effecting his design. Therefore being determined to expose to public derision, the several defects opposite to the qualifications of an agreeable or sociable person, after having exposed so many other subjects of ridicule, there remained for him only to try his talent on the ridicule which the world least of all forgives, that of virtue; this is what he has done in the *Misanthrope*.

Two things there are which you cannot deny: one, that the character of *Alceste* in this play, is that of a fair, open, and in short downright honest man; the other, that the poet makes him a subject of ridicule. This, in my opinion, is sufficient to condemn Moliere. O, say you, the object of his
raillery

raillery is not Alceste's virtue, but a real failing, misanthropy, or aversion to mankind. But it is not fact that Alceste has any such aversion: let not this name of Misanthrope impose on the world, as if the person who bore it were an enemy to the human race. Such an aversion would not be a foible or defect, but a natural depravity, and the greatest of vices; since all social virtues being reduced to benevolence, nothing can be so diametrically contrary to them as inhumanity. The real misanthrope is a monster: could he exist, he would not excite our laughter, but strike us with horror. You may have seen at the Italian theatre a play intitled, *Life is a dream*; if you can recollect the hero of that piece, there you have a real misanthrope.

What sort of a misanthrope then is Moliere's? An honest man who detests the corrupt manners of his age, and the iniquity of his cotemporaries; who, merely because he loves his fellow creatures, hates the mischief which they do to one another, and the vices from whence this mischief ariseth. Were he less affected with the failings of humanity, less incensed at the iniquities he daily sees, would he be less humane? As well might you pretend that a fond father loves another man's children better than his own, because he is vexed at the faults of the latter, and is silent in regard to those of the former.

These notions of the misanthrope are perfectly explained in the course of the play. He says, I acknowledge, that he has conceived an immortal hatred

ered against mankind; but on what occasion does he say it (a)? Just at the time when provoked to see his friend basely betraying his conscience, and deceiving the man who asks him his opinion; he finds this friend jesting with him in the midst of his anger. It is natural that this anger should rise to the very height of passion, and make him say more than he would in cool blood. Besides, the reason he gives for this universal hatred, is very just.

Some because they are knaves,

Others because they are complaisant to knaves.

It is not then that he is an enemy to mankind, but to the knavery of one part of them, and to the encouragement which this knavery receives from the other. Were there to be neither knaves nor sycophants, he would love all the world. Every honest man is a misanthrope in this sense; or rather the real misanthropes are those who do not think thus: for upon the whole, I do not know a greater enemy to society, than the man who is every body's friend; who is pleased with every thing, so as

(a) I must acquaint the reader, that having no books nor papers by me, and all my materials consisting of a confused remembrance of the remarks which I formerly made at the play-house; I may be mistaken in my quotations, and invert the order of the plays. But even if my examples were not apposite, this would not hinder my reasons from being just, since they are not drawn from this or that particular play, but from the general spirit of the stage, which I have thoroughly studied.

to give constant encouragement to knaves, and to flatter those vices from whence every ill ariseth to society.

A strong proof that Alceste is not a misanthrope in the literal sense, is this, that with all his bluntness and grumbling, still he engages and pleases the audience. The spectators, indeed, would not chuse to resemble him; because so much uprightness is very troublesome: but there is not one of them all that would be sorry to have dealings with a man of his character; which could never be the case, were he a declared enemy of mankind. In the rest of Moliere's plays, the ridiculous person is generally odious or contemptible; here, though Alceste has real foibles, which we may innocently laugh at, yet in the bottom of our hearts we feel such a respect for him, as is not in our power to stifle. On this occasion, the force of virtue prevails over the poet's art, and does honour to his character. Though Moliere wrote some plays deserving of censure, yet he himself was an honest man; but never did the pencil of an honest man disguise the features of justice and sincerity in such odious colours. Further; Moliere has put such a number of his own maxims into the mouth of Alceste, that a great many are of opinion, he intended to draw his own picture. This appeared by the concern the pit was in the first night, for not being of the misanthrope's opinion in regard to the sonnet, for it was very plain the poet thought so.

And yet this good, this virtuous character, is represented as a subject of ridicule; and such he is indeed

indeed in some respects; but what shews that the poet's aim is to render him ridiculous, is the character of his friend Philintes, which he contrasts with that of Alceste. This Philintes is the sage of the play; one of those honest men in high life, whose maxims greatly resemble those of knaves; one of those mild, those moderate persons, who are sure to tell you that things go well, because their interest is they should not go better; who are content with every body, because they care for nobody; who, round a plentiful table, maintain it is false that poor people are starving; who, with their pockets well lined, find fault with preaching in favour of the poor; who, when their own house is secure, would not make the least stir, if the whole world besides was ransacked, murdered and destroyed, because God has blessed them with an eminent degree of patience, to bear the misfortunes of other people.

It is obvious, that so cool a reasoner as Philintes is a very fit person to work up the other into a ridiculous excess of passion; and Moliere's fault is not for having made the misanthrope a choleric man; but for making him break out into childish fits, on points that ought not to move him. The character of the misanthrope is not at the poet's disposal; his predominant passion determines it. This is a violent hatred of vice, owing to an ardent love of virtue, and irritated by the continual sight of human iniquity. None, therefore, but a great and noble soul is capable of it. The horror and contempt which this same passion encourages, against the several vices by which it was roused,

serves to exclude these vices from that person's breast. Besides, this constant contemplation of the vices of society, detaches him from himself, to fix his whole attention upon mankind. This habit raises, and ennobles his ideas, while it destroys all those base inclinations, which strengthen self-love: and from this circumstance flows a generous fortitude; while the soul disdains to amuse itself with sentiments unbecoming its dignity.

Not but that man is always man; but that his passion oftentimes renders him weak, unjust, and unreasonable; but that he spies out the hidden motives of other people's actions, with a secret pleasure at seeing the corruption of their hearts; but that a trifling evil will frequently throw him into a great passion, and an artful knave will be able, by frequent provocation, to make him pass for one as bad as himself: however it is still true, that all means are not proper to produce these effects, and that they ought to be suited to his character, before he can be brought into play: otherwise it would be substituting another person instead of the misanthrope, and representing him with features not his own.

Here we see the tendency of those foibles, for which the misanthrope's character is distinguished, and what an excellent use Moliere makes of this in the several scenes between Alceste and his friend, where the quaint sentences and the raillery of the latter disconcert the former every instant, and make him say a thousand fooleries, which are extremely well placed: but this sour, morose character, which fills him with so much acrimony
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and gall, should prevent him at the same time from falling into a childish, groundless passion, or from having any strong personal prejudice, to which he ought by no means to be subject. Let him rail against the several vices which he sees prevail, this will only add a few new features to the portrait; but let him be cool in regard to that which is levelled at himself. For, having declared war against all villains, he must expect that they will declare it against him in their turn. Had he not foreseen the mischief which his freedom will do him, it would be stupidity, and not a virtue. Let a wanton wife dishonour his bed, let traitors betray him, let false friends forsake him, he ought to bear it without repining. He knows mankind.

Should these distinctions be just, Moliere has not hit off the misanthrope. Do you imagine it was through mistake? Not in the least. But you see how the desire of exciting laughter at the expence of this character, has obliged him to degrade an honest man, contrary to dramatic truth.

After the adventure of the sonnet, how comes it that Alceste does not expect the bad usage of Orontes? Can he be surprized when he is informed of it, as if it was the first time in his life that he had been sincere, or the first time that his sincerity had procured him an enemy? Ought not he to prepare himself quietly for the loss of his suit, instead of previously expressing a childish spight?

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*It may cost me twenty thousand livres, at most
But for twenty thousand livres I shall have a
right to rave and storm.*

A misanthrope has no occasion to purchase the privilege of storming at so dear a rate, he need only to open his eyes. And he does not set a sufficient value upon money, to imagine he has acquired a new privilege of this kind by losing his cause: but the audience must be made to laugh.

In the scene with Dubois, the more Alcestes has reason to be angry, the more he ought to command his temper; because the valet's stupidity is not a vice. The misanthrope, and a hasty passionate man, are two very different characters: and here was occasion to distinguish them. Moliere knew this very well; but the audience must be made to laugh.

Though I run the risk of making the reader laugh at my expence, I dare charge this author with having missed an opportunity of shewing a greater regard to decency, to truth, and perhaps to beauty of character. This would have been in changing his plot, in such a manner that Philintes should enter as a necessary actor in the intricate part of the play, and the actions of Philintes and Alcestes might be set in apparent opposition with their principles, and in perfect conformity to their characters. What I mean is, that the misanthrope should have been always raving mad upon the subject of public vice, and perfectly

perfectly calm in regard to the personal injuries done to himself. On the contrary, the philosopher Philintes ought to behold the vices of society with a Stoic phlegm, and to run mad upon the least hurt done directly to himself. And indeed I observe that those people, who are so easy in regard to public injustice, always make the most noise upon the least injury done to their own persons, and preserve their philosophy only so long as they have no occasion for it themselves. They are like the Irishman, who would not get out of bed, though the house was on fire. What's that to me? said he, I am but a lodger. At length the flames having reached his room, he jumps up, runs about, cries out, bestirs himself, and begins to be convinced, that we ought sometimes to be concerned for the house we dwell in, though it be not our property.

To me it seems, that handling those characters in this manner, each would have been more just, more regular, and that of Alcestes in particular would have produced a better effect; but then the audience could have laughed only at the expence of the man of the world, and the author's intention was, that they should laugh at the Misanthrope (a).

With

(a) I make no doubt, but upon the plan abovementioned, a man of genius might make a new Misanthrope, as just, and as natural as the Athenian, of equal merit with that of Moliere, and incomparably more instructive. I see but one inconveniency in this new play, it would be impossible for it to succeed. For, say what you will, nobody chuses to

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laugh

With the same view he makes him enter into a scene of humour, in a taste quite different from that of a man of his character. Such is the following conceit in the scene of the sonnet :

*Plague take thy fall, thou poisoning devil !
I wish thou badst had a fall to break thy nose.*

A conceit so much the more misplaced in the Misanthrope's mouth, as he himself had found fault with some much better in the sonnet of Orontes ; and it is very extraordinary that the person who makes it, proposes a moment afterwards the song of *King Henry* for a pattern of taste. It signifies nothing to say that this word drops from him at the time he is in a passion : for passion seldom dictates conceits ; and Alceste having been all his life a grumbler, ought even when he grumbles, to assume a tone suitable to his character.

*Thou poor cringing wretch,
Thou praisest nonsense.*

In this manner ought the Misanthrope to have expressed himself in a passion. A conceit will never do after that. But the audience must be made to laugh ; and by such means is virtue debased.

One thing very remarkable in this play is, that the caricaturas, which the poet has given to the laugh at his own dishonour. And thus we are come back to the first principles.

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Misanthrope, have obliged him to soften the essential part of the character; so that whereas in all his other plays the parts are over-done, in order to produce a better effect; in this alone the features are deadened, with a view to render the character more ridiculous. This is demonstrated by the very scene, of which I have been speaking. There we see Alceste using fetches and shifts, to tell Orontes his opinion. This is not the Misanthrope; but the man of the world, who feels some reluctance to deceive the person that consults him. To suit up to his character, Alceste should have said to him bluntly, your sonnet is good for nothing, throw it into the fire; but this would have prevented the laughter arising from the Misanthrope's perplexity, and from his frequent repetition of, *I do not say that*, which however is in the main a lye. If Philintes, after his example, had said to him on this occasion, *and what dost thou say, traitor?* What answer could he have made? Really it is not worth while to be only a Misanthrope by halves; for if once he is allowed the least shifting, or the least deviation from the truth, what reason can he have to stop till he becomes as false as any great man of them all?

Alceste's friend ought to know him. How durst he propose to pay a visit to the judges, that is, in plain terms, to endeavour to corrupt them? How can he suppose that a man, who neglects all forms of civility through love of virtue, should be capable of not doing his duty through a motive of interest? To solicit a judge! one need

not be a Misanthrope, it is sufficient to be an honest man, to make no such attempt. For which way soever the thing turns, either the person who solicits a judge, exhorts him to do his duty, and then he affronts him; or he proposes an exception of persons, and then he wants to seduce him: since every exception of persons is criminal in a judge, who should take cognizance of the affair, but not of the parties, and see that the law is executed. Now I say, that to induce a judge to commit a criminal action, is committing it yourself; and that it is much better to lose a just cause, than to be guilty of a criminal action. This is plain, clear doctrine, and there is no gainsaying it. I am not ignorant, that the world is directed by other maxims of morality; but it is sufficient to me to shew, that wherever the Misanthrope was exposed to ridicule, he did but act the part of an honest man; and that it was out of character, if his friend supposed he could act otherwise.

If the ingenious author sometimes gives a full scope to this character, this is only when it enlivens the scene, and produces a more sensible contrast, or comic opposition. Such is, for instance, the fullen taciturnity of Alcestes, and the animated censure of the conversation at the coquette's apartment.

Let's be gone, stop, push on, my good friends.

Here the author has plainly distinguished the detractor from the Misanthrope. The latter, with
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all his gall and sourness, detests calumny and satire. His attack is against public vice, and knaves in general: private detraction is mean, and unworthy of him; he despises, he hates it in others; and when he says any thing ill of a person, he begins with telling it him to his face. Thus in the whole play, he acts his part no where so well as in this scene; because here he is what he ought to be; and if he makes the audience laugh, honest people are not ashamed of having joined with the crowd.

In general however we cannot deny, but that if Alceste was more of the Misanthrope, he would be less entertaining: because his frankness and resolution would then admit of no evasions nor shifts, and of course he would not be puzzled. It is therefore, you will say, out of respect for him, that the poet sometimes tempers his character: on the contrary, it is to render him more ridiculous. Besides, another reason obliges him to it; this is, that as the Misanthrope must talk of what he sees, he is to live in society, and of course to temper his sincerity and his manners, with some of those regards to falsehood and deception which constitute politeness, and which are required of every one that intends to stand fair with the world: were he to behave otherwise, what he says would be of no effect. The author's business is to render him ridiculous, but not a fool; and such he would appear in the eye of the public, if he were to be altogether a sage.

I am loth to leave this admirable play, when once I have begun; the more I examine it, the

more beauties disclose themselves to my view, But, since it is of all Moliere's plays, that which contains the best and soundest morality, you may judge from thence of the rest; and I doubt not but you will agree, that the author's intention being to please a corrupt people, either his moral has a tendency to vice, or the apparent good which it recommendeth, is more dangerous than vice itself; because it seduceth by a semblance of reason; because it teaches us to prefer the use and maxims of the world to exact probity; because it makes wisdom consist in a certain medium between vice and virtue; because to the great conveniency of the spectators, it persuades them, that to be an honest man, it is sufficient not to be a downright villain.

Too great would be the advantage on my side, were I, after examining Moliere, to criticize his successors, who had neither his genius nor honesty, but yet pursued more steadily the same interested views, and made it their business to flatter the profligate youth of the town, and a set of debauched women. I shall not do Dancourt the honour to mention him: though he does not offend us with obscene language; yet we must have nothing chaste about us, except our ears, to be able to bear with his comedies. Reynard is more modest, but equally dangerous: and while he leaves the other to amuse women of loose character, he himself undertakes to tutor and encourage pick-pockets. It is incredible, that the civil magistrate should suffer a play to be acted in the heart of Paris, where a nephew, the hero of the piece,

In the very apartment of his uncle, whom he sees expiring, busies himself with his worthy comrades, about such offices as the law rewards with the halter; and that instead of shedding tears, a duty which humanity alone would require of strangers on the like occasion, they should only endeavour to shew their wit by cracking barbarous jests over the sad solemnity of death. In this odious scene, the most sacred rights, and the most tender sensations of nature, are exposed to ridicule. The most criminal acts are wantonly drawn into one view, and with such an air of ridicule, as makes the whole pass for good breeding. Forgery, fraud, theft, lying, and inhumanity, are all acted on this occasion, and all applauded. The deceased having thought proper to rise again to life, to the great mortification of his dear nephew, and refusing to confirm what they had done in his name, they contrive to extort his consent by force, and the scene concludes to the satisfaction of the players and the spectators, who are involuntarily prejudiced in favour of those wretches, and leave the playhouse with this pleasing reflection of having, by their approbation, shewn themselves accomplices of the very crimes which they saw acted on the stage.

Let us dare to speak without disguise. Is there one of us all, who is sure he could stay to see a whole play of that sort, without being concerned in one half of the knavish tricks which are acted on the occasion? Who is it that would not be vexed a little, if the thief happened to be caught, or to miss his aim? Who is it that does

not become in some measure guilty of theft; by siding with the thief? For what is siding with a person, but putting one's self in his place? A fine school for youth, where even adult persons find it difficult to guard against the allurements of vice! Is it meant by this, that it is never lawful to expose base actions on the stage? Not at all: but in truth I must say, that to know how to expose a knave upon the stage, the poet must be a very honest man.

So usual are these errors in French comedy, that to attempt to rectify them, would be hurting the stage. Modern authors, directed by purer intentions, write purer plays; but what is the consequence? they have neither drollery nor humour, and are productive of no effect. They are very instructive, if you please; but they are still more tiresome: one might as well go to hear a sermon.

In this declension of the stage, poets find themselves obliged to substitute false ornaments, such as are only apt to catch the eye of the populace, in the room of real beauties. Incapable of supporting the natural strength and ridicule of comedy, they have heightened the charms of love. The same has been done in tragedy, to supply those incidents arising from political interests, which are no longer considered, and those plain natural sensations with which we are no longer affected. Poets rival each other, who shall best serve the public, by giving new vigour and colouring to this dangerous passion; and ever since Moliere and Corneille's time, we find that no-
thing

thing succeeds upon the stage, but romances, under the name of dramatic writings.

Love is the empire of the fair. Here they must give the law; because in the order of nature, resistance belongs to them, and man cannot surmount this resistance, but at the expence of his liberty. It is therefore a plain consequence of such entertainments, to extend this empire of the sex, to render women directresses of the public, and to invest them with the same power over the spectators, as they have over their lovers. Do you think, Sir, that this inversion of the order of things has not its inconveniency, and that by taking such care to enlarge the ascendant of the female sex, ours will be better governed?

There may perhaps be some women in the world worthy of being listened to by a man of honour: but is it from women in general, that we are to take advice? and is there no other way of doing honour to their sex, than by degrading ours? The object most charming in nature, most capable of touching a sensible heart, and of inclining it to virtue, is, I grant you, a good, a lovely woman: but where is this heavenly object concealed? Is it not extremely hard, after gazing on those angels with so much pleasure on the stage, to find them of so different a mould in society? Yet the bewitching picture produceth its effect. The incantation caused by these virtuous phenomena, redounds to the advantage of the dishonourable part of the sex. Suppose a youth to have no other knowledge of the world but from the stage, he thinks that the way to virtue,

virtue, is to look out for a mistress, who shall lead him by the hand; and he flatters himself that he shall find a *Constantia*, or at least a *Cenia* (a). Allured by the empty notion of a guide, by a modest winning air, and counterfeited softness, the unhappy youth, *Nescius aura fallacis*, surrenders himself into the arms of perdition, while he thinks he is in the high road to wisdom.

This affords me an opportunity of proposing a kind of a problem. The ancients in general had a great respect for the fair sex (b): but they expressed it, by forbearing to expose them to the public eye; and they imagined to do honour to

(a) It is not at a venture that I quote *Cenia* on this occasion, though this charming play was written by a lady: for as I am sincere in the pursuit of truth, I cannot conceal any thing that makes against my opinion; and it is not this or that lady in particular, but the generality of the sex, that I deny to have equal abilities with ours. The author of *Cenia* in particular I honour the more readily, as having occasion to find fault with some of her speeches, I shew myself, as I have always endeavoured to shew myself, sincere and disinterested.

(b) They gave them several honourable appellations, which are either low or obsolete with us. It is well known what use Virgil made of that of *Matres* upon an occasion, where the Trojan mothers were not very prudent. The French have no other word in its stead but *Dames*, which does not suit them all, which even grows obsolete, and has been altogether banished from polite company. I observe, that the ancients were more inclined to borrow their honourable titles from the rights of nature, and that we derive ours from the privileges of rank and preferment.

their

their modesty, by being silent on their other virtues. It was a maxim with them, that the country, where the least was said of women, must be remarkable for the purest manners; and that the most virtuous lady must be she who was least the subject of conversation. It is upon this principle that a Spartan, hearing a stranger expatiate greatly in praise of a lady of his acquaintance, stopped him short, saying with some warmth, when wilt thou have done speaking ill of a virtuous woman? Hence also it is, that in comedy, the women concerned in love affairs were generally either slaves or harlots. Such an idea had they of the modesty of the sex, that they would have thought it a breach of decorum to represent a virtuous girl upon the stage (a). In short, the picture of naked vice was less shocking to them, than an offence against modesty.

With us, on the contrary, the woman esteemed is she who makes the most racket and noise; who is most talked of; who is most seen in public; who entertains most company at table; who gives herself the most insolent airs; who is the most positive; who pronounces and assigns the proper degrees and rewards to abilities, virtue, and merit; in short, to whom the literati most humbly cringe

(a) If they conducted themselves otherwise in tragedy, it was because, according to the political system of their stage, they were not at all concerned, that persons of high station should be thought to have no occasion for modesty, and to form an exception to the rules of morality.

for favour. It is still worse on the stage. In the main, the women of the world know nothing, though they pretend to judge of every thing: but those of the stage, puffed up with learning not their own, and made philosophers by the grace of authors, attempt to foil us with our own weapons, and the foolish spectators go to hear instructions from women, which have been dictated by our sex. This is really making a jest of them, is taxing them with a childish vanity, and I make no doubt but the most sensible among them are angry at it. Look into most of the modern plays: it is surely a woman that knows every thing, and teaches it to man; it is the court lady that makes little John de Saintré repeat his catechism. A child cannot eat a bit of bread, unless it is cut by his governante. This is the real picture of all new plays. The mistress is on the stage, and the children are in the pit. I deny not but this method hath its advantages, and but such directresses are capable of giving due weight to their instructions: let us return however to the point. I would fain know which of the two customs, that of the ancients, or ours, does most honour to the fair, and best demonstrates the regard, which is due to their sex?

The same cause by which the women in our plays have obtained the superiority over men, gives it also to youth over old age; and this is another subversion of the natural order of things, no less deserving of censure. Since the public are always prejudiced in favour of lovers, it follows that per-

sons stricken in years, can never act any other than a subordinate character. Either to form the intricacy of the plot, they obstruct the desires of the young couple, and then they are odious; or they grow amorous themselves, and then they are ridiculous. *Turpe senex miles.* In tragedy they are tyrants, and usurpers: in comedy, jealous-pated, usurers, pedants, crusty old fellows, whom all the world is glad to deceive. Thus you see in how honourable a light, old age is exhibited on the stage, and how young people are taught to respect them. Let us return thanks to the celebrated author of *Zaira* and *Nanine*, for having screened the venerable *Lusignan* and the good old *Philip Humbert* from this contempt. There are a few others besides, that deserve the same praise: but is this sufficient to stem the torrent of public prejudice, and to efface those ridiculous impressions, which we have imbibed from most authors, against venerable old age? Who doubts but that the practice of making old men odious on the stage, contributes to render them disagreeable in society; and that by accustoming ourselves to confound those we see in common life, with the fondle wives, and the doating old fellows in comedy, we learn to despise them all alike. Observe at an assembly in Paris, what coxcombs the youths are, and with what an insolent tone they deliver themselves; while the old men are so timid, that they hardly dare to open their lips; and there is scarce any notice taken of them. Do you see such behaviour in the country, or in places where no theatres are established? does
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not a grey beard, with hoary locks, command respect in all parts but in great cities? O, but the old fellows at Paris, say you, contribute to render themselves contemptible, by departing from that gravity which suits their age, to disguise themselves in the unbecoming dress and manners of youth; and as they set up for gallantry, it is but natural that young people should have the preference, in a youthful profession. On the contrary, it is because they have no other way to be admitted into company, that they have recourse to this; and they had rather recommend themselves to favour by their ridiculous behaviour, than be excluded from society. Not that by affecting an agreeable air they become really agreeable, or that an old lover of sixty is very engaging; but even his acting out of character turns to his advantage; it is adding another triumph to a lady, who with a Nestor in her train, thinks she shews to all the world, that even the insensibility of old age is not proof against her charms. This is the reason why the women give such encouragement to those ancient votaries of Cytherea, and are so malicious as to give the name of charmers to poor old fools, who would be still less agreeable in their eyes, were they less foolish. But to return to my subject.

These are not the only effects, that arise from founding the interest of the stage intirely in love. Others more grave and important, are attributed to the same cause, the reality of which I shall not examine into at present, though they have been often enforced by ecclesiastic writers. The usual answer is, that the dangers which may follow from
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the representation of a bewitching passion, are prevented by the very manner of representing them; that the love exhibited on the stage is rendered legitimate; that its end is honest; that it is frequently sacrificed to virtue and to duty; and whenever it is criminal, it meets with its proper punishment. Extremely well; but is it not ridiculous to pretend thus to regulate, when it is too late, the motions of the heart by the precepts of reason; and to say that we must wait for the event, to know what impression we are to receive from the cause by which that event is produced? The complaint against the stage, is not that it encourages criminal passions, but that it creates too great a sensibility, which is afterwards indulged at the expence of virtue. The tenderness felt there has no determinate object of itself, but occasions the want of that object; it does not make us instantly fall in love, but prepares us for it; it does not chuse the person we are to love, but it compels us to make this choice. Thus it is either innocent or criminal, only by the use we make of it according to our natural character, which independent of example. Were it even true, that none but legitimate passions are represented on the stage, does it follow from thence that their impressions are weaker, or their effects less dangerous? Just as if the lively image of an innocent affection was less tender, less engaging, less capable of warming a sensible heart, than the idea of a criminal passion, where the horror of the vice serves at least for a counter-poison! But if innocence makes the passion appear more
amiable,

amiable, this circumstance is quickly cancelled from the memory, while the tender object remains deeply impressed in the bottom of the heart. When the patrician Manilius was expelled the Roman senate, for kissing his wife in the presence of his daughter; if we consider the action in itself, what was there in it deserving of censure? Nothing, surely: it even expressed a virtuous passion. But the chaste affection of the mother might inspire the daughter with unchaste thoughts. It was, therefore, setting a very bad example by a virtuous action. Such are the effects of legitimate love on the stage.

They pretend to cure us of love, by the representation of its folly. I know not what the poets think; but I find that the audience constantly side with the weak lover, and are often vexed that he is not still weaker. Now is this the way to avoid resembling him?

Please to recollect, Sir, a play which you and I went to see some years ago, and which gave us a pleasure we little expected; whether it was because the author had interspersed it with more theatrical graces than we imagined, or whether it was owing to the extraordinary abilities of the actress. I mean to speak of Racine's *Berenice*. In what disposition of mind does the spectator behold the beginning of this play? with a full contempt for the imbecillity of an emperor and a Roman, who wavers like the meanest of mortals between his mistress and his duty; who, fluctuating in an ignoble uncertainty, disgraces by his effeminate complaints, the divine character given him by
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historians; who gives us pain to see the benefactor and delight of mankind, changed into a poor whining lover. Now what does the same spectator think of him after the play is over? He concludes with lamenting the fate of that affectionate lover whom he despised; with espousing his cause in regard to that very passion for which he arraigned him, with secretly murmuring at the sacrifice which he is obliged to make to the laws of his country. This is what each of us felt at the play. Titus's character, well acted, would have been productive of a good effect, had it been more worthy of him; but every body felt that the audience were chiefly concerned for Berenice, and that her love determined the catastrophe. Not that her continual whining occasioned any great concern in the course of the play: but in the fifth act, when she ceased to complain, and when with a cloudy air, her eyes no longer wet, and her voice spent, she expressed herself in a dumb scene of sorrow, bordering on despair; the ability of the actress, added very much to the softness of the scene, and the audience were so affected, as to begin to shed tears, when Berenice ceased to mourn. What meant all this, but that they were afraid lest she should be sent back; that the concern she afterwards felt, was anticipated in their breasts; and that every one of them would have been glad, that Titus had submitted to love's empire, even at the risk of his reputation. Is not here a tragedy that perfectly answers its purpose, and has taught the audience how to subdue the weakness of love?

The event does not answer to these wishes: but that does not signify; the unravelling does not destroy the effect of the play. The queen sets out without leave of the audience; the emperor sends her back *invitus invitam*, and I may add, *invito spectatore*. In vain does Titus continue to shew himself a Roman; he stands alone; and the spectators are all wedded to Berenice.

Were any one to dispute this effect with me; even were he to maintain, that the example of fortitude and virtue which Titus shews by subduing his passion, forms the business of the play, and is the cause that when we pity Berenice, at the same time we are glad of the occasion; still he would coincide with my principles: because, as I have already observed, the sacrifices made to duty and virtue, have ever a secret charm even in regard to corrupt minds: and to shew you that this sentiment is not the effect of the play, the company had the same notion before it began. This, however, is no argument but that the indulging of some passions would, in their eye, appear preferable to virtue itself; and though they are satisfied with being witnesses to the virtue and magnanimity of Titus, yet they would be better pleased to see him happy in Berenice's arms; or at least, they would be very glad, upon these terms, to be in his place. To render this truth still more obvious, let us suppose a plot quite different from that of the author. That Titus, after consulting his own breast, finding himself unwilling either to violate the laws of his country, or to sacrifice his happiness to ambition, should come, with contrary maxims, to abdicate

abdicate the empire at the feet of Berenice; that, struck with so great a sacrifice, this princess should think it her duty to refuse the hand of her lover, and yet should accept of it; that the happy pair, inebriated with the charms of love, peace, and innocence, and renouncing all empty grandeur, should in compliance with the impulse of nature, the spring of all true joy, determine to live happy in some obscure corner of the earth; that so moving a scene should be animated with all those tender and pathetic sentiments which arise from the subject, and which Racine would have displayed to such advantage; that Titus, upon his retiring from the Romans, addressed a speech to them adapted to the circumstances; is it not evident, that unless an author knows very little of his business, such a speech must melt the whole house into tears? I grant if you will, that such a conclusion of this play would be less virtuous, less instructive, and less conformable to history; but would it afford less pleasure and satisfaction to the audience? The first four acts would stand pretty much as they do at present, and yet they would contain quite a different lesson. So true is it that the scenes of love make a deeper impression than the maxims of wisdom, and that the effect of a tragedy is altogether independent of that of the unravelling of the plot.

Would you know whether it be certain that tragedy, by shewing us the fatal consequences of immoderate passion, instructs us how to guard against them? You have only to consult experience. These fatal consequences are strongly repre-

sented in Zaira; they cost the two lovers their lives, and Orofman much more than his life; since he lays violent hands on himself, merely to be delivered from the most cruel pang that can torture the human breast; a remorse for having stabbed his mistress. Surely these are very moving lessons. I should be glad to find either man or woman, that would dare to say they went away sufficiently guarded against the passion, after seeing Zaira once acted. For my part, I think I hear each spectator say to himself, when the play is over; ah! give me a Zaira, and I'll take care not to kill her. If the ladies are never tired with going to see this bewitching tragedy, and with persuading our sex to bear them company, I will not pretend to say that they do it with a view of encouraging themselves by this heroine's example, not to imitate a sacrifice in which she succeeds so ill; but it is, because of all the tragedies acted upon the French stage, none displays with greater charms, the power of love and empire of beauty; and we further learn, not to judge of a mistress from appearances. Let Orofman sacrifice Zaira to his jealousy, a sensible woman is not at all frightened at this transport of passion: for it is less misery to be killed than to be slighted by the object we love.

Paint the effects of love, which way you please; it is a bewitching passion, or it is not love. If it be ill painted, the play is bad; if it be well done, it renders us blind to every other consideration. By struggles, hardships, and sufferings, it becomes still more moving, than if it were to meet with no resistance. Far from displeasing us with its melancholy

lancholy scenes, it engages us the more by a variety of disappointments. We say, in spite of ourselves, that so sweet a passion is a consolation in every distress. So tender an image insensibly melts the heart; we view it on that side only which leads to pleasure, but leave it where it torments. Nobody thinks himself obliged to be a hero; and thus it is that, by admiring a virtuous passion, we abandon ourselves to lawless love.

What makes this image so dangerous, is the very thing that is done to render it agreeable; it is because we never see it represented on the stage, but in the breasts of virtuous lovers, of lovers that are generally patterns of perfection. And how can we avoid being concerned for two lovers, whose character is of itself so very engaging? I question whether we have any one play, where mutual love has not always engaged the favour of the audience. Should some unhappy wretch burn with a flame unreturned, he is the scorn of the pit. Poets think they do wonders in making a lover amiable or odious, according as he is well or ill received in his amours; in managing so, that the public shall always approve of his mistress's affections; and in giving to the tender passion as great a power and influence as to virtue. Whereas, they should teach young people to mistrust the allurements of love, to shun the precipices of a blind passion which ever mistakes its object, and to be afraid of consigning a virtuous breast to arms unworthy of its affections. I know not whether the misanthrope or the hero of the play has made a bad choice. To make him fall in love was no-

thing at all, the high scene is to make him fall in love with a coquette. All the other women in the play are a group of devotees: one would be apt to say, that they are fanatics. Is this a faithful picture of society? Is this the way to make us distrust a passion, which ruins so many generous minds? We are made, or almost made, to believe that a man of honour is obliged to be a lover; and that a woman, who loves and is beloved, must of course be virtuous. Is not this very good doctrine!

Again: I do not take upon me to judge, whether it be right or wrong to make love the principal business of the play; but I insist, that if its descriptions are sometimes dangerous, they will be always so, do what you will to disguise them. I insist again, that it is speaking either insincerely or ignorantly, to want to rectify this passion by other impressions, which never descend so deep as the heart, and are soon found to be of a different nature; impressions which disguise its dangers, and give to this bewitching passion a new allure, by which it destroys its votaries.

Whether we deduce the best form of plays, from the nature of the stage in general; or whether we examine, what the most celebrated writers of a learned age and nation have done for ours; I think we may conclude from all these different considerations, that the moral effect of the stage can never be good or wholesome of itself; since, upon reckoning all its advantages, we find none that have any sort of real utility, without inconveniencies that outbalance them. Now a consequence, even of
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its inutility, is, that although the stage may not tend to improve our manners, yet it may go a great way to corrupt them. It encourages and strengthens the passions, and of course it weakens and enervates the mind by continual emotions; while our ineffectual concern for virtue, serves only to flatter self-love, without obliging us to be virtuous. Therefore such of my countrymen, as do not disapprove of plays considered in themselves, are certainly in the wrong.

Beside these effects of the stage, relative to the things represented, there are others equally essential, which relate directly to the theatre, and to the actors; and it is to these that the citizens of Geneva attribute the taste for luxury, dress, and idle dissipation, which they are afraid, and with good reason, to see introduced into their little republic. Not only the keeping company with comedians, but even the theatre itself, may produce this pernicious taste, by the decorations, and the expensive dress of the players. Were it to have no other effect than that of interrupting the course of civil and domestic concerns at particular hours, and of affording a sure retreat to idleness, it is impossible but that the conveniency of frequenting regularly the same place every day, to forget one's self, and to take up with artificial amusements, must give a citizen very different habits, and inspire him with different manners. But will these changes be of service or detriment to the community? This is a question which depends not so much on an enquiry into the nature of the stage, as into the character of the

spectators. Certain it is, that these alterations would soon bring them all nearly to the same point; and therefore the differences are to be estimated by the condition of each person, before this revolution.

Even were these amusements to be indifferent in themselves (and for a moment I am willing to consider them as such) still it is the nature of the occupations which they interrupt, that makes us judge them good or bad: especially when they are so engaging, as to become occupations themselves; and to substitute a relish for pleasure instead of that for business. It is but reasonable to encourage the amusements of those whose occupations are hurtful; and to divert such as have useful occupations, from those very amusements.

Another general consideration is, that it is by no means proper, to let idle and corrupt people chuse their own amusements; for fear they should contrive only such as are suitable to their vicious inclinations, and thus become as mischievous in their pleasures as they are in their serious pursuits. But let a plain industrious people divert themselves after their day's work, when and as they please, there is never any danger of their abusing this liberty: and we have no occasion to look out for proper diversions to hit their taste; for, as there is little occasion for sauce, when meats are seasoned by abstinence and hunger, neither needs there any preparation to divert those who are exhausted by fatigue, and to whom repose alone is a high enjoyment. In a great city, abounding with idle, intriguing people, who have

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neither religion nor principles; and whose imagination, depraved by laziness, by the love of pleasure, and excessive wants, engenders nothing but mischief; and prompts them to every kind of villany; in a great city, where morality and honour are reckoned for nothing, because every man can easily conceal his private vices from the public eye, and is sure of gaining credit and esteem by a superiority of fortune; in such a city, the civil magistrate cannot be too ingenious in multiplying lawful pleasures; nor in studying to render them agreeable, to the end that private persons may not be exposed to the temptation of looking out for more dangerous amusements. As to divert and keep such people from their occupations, is to divert them from doing harm; the stealing of two hours a day from the influence of vice, would prevent the twelfth part of the crimes that are committed; and the hours spent at the theatre, and in running to coffee-houses, and other places of resort for drones and sharpers, are an advantage to fathers of families, either in regard to the chastity of their wives and daughters, or to their private purses.

But in lesser cities, in places not so populous, where private citizens, being always under the public eye, are naturally censors to one another; and where the civil magistrate can easily have an eye over them all; different maxims are to be pursued. If the inhabitants are industrious, and employed in arts and manufactures, care should be taken not to offer any amusements to divert the pursuits of greedy interest, which makes a pleasure of

of its care, and enriches the prince by the avarice of his subjects. If the country has no trade, nor manufactures, far from encouraging that indolent, easy life, to which the inhabitants are but too much inclined, we ought to render it irksome to them, by obliging them to look out for some occupation, in which they may usefully employ their time. I find that the Parisians, who judge of every thing superficially, because they have no leisure for serious inquiries, conclude from the dead appearance which most of the country towns have at first sight, that the inhabitants are plunged into a stupid inactivity, and do no more than vegetate, or fight and quarrel. But this is a mistake which they would easily get over, were they to reflect, that most of the men of letters who make a figure at Paris, and most of the useful discoveries and new inventions, come from those despicable provinces. Do but make a little stay in some of those country towns, where at first you thought you should meet with none but blockheads; not only you will find people of better sense than your great city apes, but you will be sure to discover some ingenious though obscure person, who will surprize you by his abilities, and by his works; whom you will surprize much more by admiring those performances; and who at the same time that he shews such prodigious efforts of labour, patience, and industry, thinks he shews you nothing but what is commonly known at Paris. Such is the simplicity of a real genius; he is neither intriguing, nor active; he knows not, nor cares to seek for, the road to honours

nour or preferment; he compares himself to nobody; all his resources center in his own mind: insensible to injuries, and almost insensible to praise, (if he knows himself) he does not assume his proper rank; and he enjoys his private store, without assigning a due degree to his merit.

In small cities we find less bustle, without doubt, in proportion, than in a capital; for the passions are not so strong, nor their wants so urgent: but we meet with more originals, more industry and invention, and more things really new; because there are fewer imitators, by having fewer models; so that every man draws from his own spring, and puts more of his own fancy into every thing that he does: because the mind being less divided, and not so much immersed in vulgar opinions, ferments much better in solitude: because, by seeing less, people imagine the more: in short, because being less pressed for want of time, they have more leisure to enlarge and digest their ideas.

I remember in my younger days, to have beheld at Neufchatel, an object extremely agreeable, and perhaps the only one of the kind upon the face of the earth: this was an intire mountain covered with habitations, each of which forms the center of the adjacent lands; so that these houses, at distances as equal as the fortunes of the proprietors, afford the numerous inhabitants of that eminence, the tranquillity of retirement, and the sweets of society. These happy peasants are at their ease, free from taxes, imposts, and oppression of landlords; they cultivate, with all possible care, those lands
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whose product is their own; and they employ the hours they can spare from tillage, in a thousand handicrafts, and in making a right use of that inventive genius with which nature has blessed them. In the winter especially, a season when the deep snows deprives them of the conveniency of communication, each man shuts himself up, with his numerous family, in a neat wooden box (a), of his own constructing, where he busies himself with a thousand amusing exercises, which prevent his being tired of his solitude, and improve his health. Never did carpenter, locksmith, glazier, or turner, by profession, enter that country; they all work for themselves, none for any body else. Amongst the great quantity of convenient and elegant furniture, with which their apartments are furnished, you see not so much as any one piece that has not been finished by a masterly hand. They have also leisure to invent, and to make a thousand different instruments of steel, wood, past-board, which they sell to foreigners, and a great many of which are sent as far as Paris; among the rest, those little wooden clocks, which have been seen there within

(a) Methinks I hear some Parisian wit exclaim (except he is reading himself) against this as well as several other passages, and largely demonstrate to the ladies (for it is to the ladies especially, that these gentlemen undertake to demonstrate) that it is impossible for a wooden house to be warm; ---- How palpable a lye! What an error in natural philosophy! Alas, poor author! For my part, I think the demonstration unanswerable. All that I know is, that the Swiss are very warm in their wooden houses, even in the depth of winter, and the midst of frost and snow.

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these few years. Some they make also of iron; and they even carry their ingenuity so far, as to make watches; but what seems incredible is, that each man includes within himself, all the different branches, into which the watch-maker's business is divided; and fabricates the several tools himself.

This is not all: they have useful books, and are tolerably well instructed; they likewise reason sensibly on most subjects (a). They make cranes, loadstones, spectacles, pumps, barometers, camera obscuras; their tapestry consists in a multitude of all sorts of instruments; you would take a peasant's stove for the shop of a mechanic, or for the cabinet of some experimental philosopher. They all understand something of designing; they know how to paint, and to compute; most of them play upon the flute; and many are acquainted with the principles of music, and sing very justly. These arts are not taught them by masters, but delivered down to them, as it were, by tradition. Of those whom I knew to understand music, one told me he had learned it of his father, another of his aunt, another of his cousin; and some imagined they had learnt it without a master. One of their most frequent amusements is to sing psalms in four parts, with their wives and children; and

(a) I might quote, for instance, a man of merit, well known at Paris, and more than once honoured with the approbation of the academy of sciences. This is M. Rivaz, a celebrated Valetian. I am sensible he has not many equals among his countrymen; but after all, it is by living as they did, that he learned to excel them.

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you are amazed to find in those rustic huts the strong and nervous harmony of Goudimel, so long forgot by our learned artists.

No more could I be tired of rambling among those charming villas, than the inhabitants were in shewing me every mark of the frankest hospitality. Unfortunately I was then young; my curiosity seemed to be that of a child, and I thought more of amusement than instruction. It is thirty years since; and the few observations that I made, are quite obliterated from my memory. This only recurs to my mind, that I incessantly admired in those extraordinary people, a mixture of cunning and simplicity, which one would think almost incompatible, and such as I never observed any where else. But this is all the idea I have retained of their manners, their society, or character. Now that I could view this happy spot with a different eye, shall I never see it more? Alas! it is in the way to my own native soil.

After having given this slight idea of the country, suppose that on the top of the mountain we have been speaking of, and in the very midst of the habitations, a theatre was erected at a small expence, under the notion, for instance, of exhibiting a decent amusement to a people in constant employment, and able to support this moderate expence; suppose again, that they take a liking to this entertainment; then let us see what objection there will be against it.

In the first place, I find that their occupations will cease to be their amusement; as soon as they have got another way of diverting themselves, this
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will give them a disrelish to their former diversions; their industry will no longer afford them the same leisure, nor the same inventions. Besides, every day there will be so much time lost to such as go to the play; neither will they return instantly to their business, when their heads are filled with the objects they have been seeing at the theatre; they will talk, they will think of them: of course there will be a cessation of labour; the first bad consequence.

How little soever they pay at the door, they must pay something: this is an expence they were not used to before. They must pay for their wives and children, when they carry them thither, and that will sometimes happen. Besides, a tradesman cannot go to a public assembly in his working habit; he will be obliged to put on his Sunday cloaths oftener, to change linen oftener, to have his hair powdered, and to be shaved; all this is attended with an expence of time and money. This is an increase of charges; a second bad consequence.

Diminution of labour, and increase of expence, require means to support it. This will be laid on the price of labour, which must necessarily raise the price of their commodities. The merchants, discouraged by this augmentation, will quit these *mountaineers* (a), and purchase those commodities of their neighbours the Swiss, who, with equal industry, will have no phrys, and con-

(a) This is the name given to the inhabitants of this mountain.

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sequently will not raise the price of their goods; Diminution of trade; a third bad consequence.

In bad weather the roads are not practicable; and as, notwithstanding this inconveniency, the comedians must live, their representations will not be interrupted. They must, therefore, render the play-house accessible at all times. In the winter, roads must be opened through the snow, and perhaps they will be paved; and God grant they do not set up lanterns. Here you see a public expence; consequently there must be contributions from private people. Establishment of taxes; a fourth bad consequence.

As the wives of the mountaineers will go to see, and to be seen, they must be dressed out to make a figure. The Castellain's lady will not chuse to sit at a play, in no better attire than that of the school-master's wife; and the latter will strive to make as good an appearance as the former. Hence an emulation of dress, which will ruin, and perhaps be followed by their husbands; and they will be continually seeking out for new contrivances, to elude the sumptuary laws. Introduction of luxury; a fifth bad consequence.

All the rest is easy to imagine. Without placing to the account, the other inconveniences, of which I have been speaking, or which I shall mention hereafter; without considering the nature of these entertainments, and their moral effects; I confine myself intirely to what relates to labour and profit; and I think I have shewn, by an evident deduction of consequences, in what manner

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a people who live at their ease, but who owe all their happiness to industry, upon exchanging reality for appearances, hurry themselves to destruction the moment they fall into luxury.

But you must not complain of my supposition as chimerical; I give it for such, and would fain only render its necessary consequences more or less striking. Take away a few circumstances, and you will find other *mountaineers*, and the example may be applied *mutatis mutandis*.

Even were it true that plays are not bad in themselves, still we are to inquire whether they do not become such in regard to the people, for whom they are designed. In particular places they may be of use to draw strangers; to increase the circulation of specie; to encourage artists; to vary fashions; to amuse the overgrown rich, or those who are aspiring to be such; to render them less mischievous; to divert the people from thinking of their misery; to make them forget their leaders, by looking at dancers; to maintain and improve some sort of taste, when virtue is fled; to cover the deformity of vice with the varnish of formality; in a word, to hinder corrupt manners from degenerating into open licentiousness. In other places they would serve only to destroy the love of labour; to discourage industry; to ruin individuals; to infect them with idleness; to make them look out for ways to subsist without working; to render the common people inactive and cowardly; to prevent them from seeing public and private objects, which ought to occupy their thoughts; to turn sobriety

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into ridicule ; to substitute a theatrical jargon in the room of virtue ; to place their whole morality in metaphysics ; to metamorphose plain citizens into wits, tradesmen's wives into fine ladies, and their daughters into coquettes. The general effect would be much the same on all men, who, by means of this change, would be more or less unfit for their several stations. By becoming equal, the vicious would be gainers, and the virtuous would be still greater losers ; they would all contract a spirit of effeminacy and indolence, which must prevent the one from attaining to high virtues, and the others from meditating villainy.

From these reflections there results a consequence directly contrary to that which I drew from the former ; namely, that when a people are corrupt, plays are good for them ; and the reverse, when the people themselves are good. One would think that these two contrary effects must destroy each other, and that the entertainment would remain indifferent to them all : but there is this difference, that as the effect which enforces both the good and the evil, depends on the nature of the performances, it is of course subject like these to a thousand modifications, which reduce it to almost nothing ; whereas that which changes good into evil, and evil into good, results from the very nature of the entertainment, and is a constant real effect, which is renewed every day, and must prevail at last.

From thence it follows, that to be able to judge whether it be proper to open a playhouse in a town, we must first of all know, whether the man-
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ners of the inhabitants are virtuous or corrupt; a question which it does not become me to determine in regard to my fellow-citizens. Be that as it may, all I can grant upon this head is, that a playhouse will do us no sort of harm, if nothing else can.

To prevent the inconveniencies that may arise from the bad example of comedians, you would be for obliging them to be honest men. Thus, say you, we should have public entertainments, and virtuous manners, so as to unite the advantages of both. Public entertainments, and virtuous manners! This would be a fine sight indeed, especially for the first time. But what method would you point out for keeping the comedians within bounds? Severe laws, well executed. This is at least acknowledging that they have need of being checked, and that the method is not easy. Severe laws, you say. The first is to suffer no such company: if we violate this, what will become of the severity of the rest? Laws well executed? The question is, whether that can be done: for the force of laws has its measure, and so has that of vice. We cannot be sure of executing the laws, till we have compared these two quantities, and find that the former surpasseth the latter. The knowledge of these two relations constitutes the proper science of a legislator: for if his business was no more than to publish edicts and regulations, with a view of redressing abuses as fast as they rise, no doubt but he would say very fine things; yet for the most part they would be ineffectual, and

serve rather as hints towards excellent laws, than as means to execute them. Upon the whole, the framing of laws is not such a great matter, but every sensible honest man may very well hit upon such institutions, as, when properly observed, shall be of great use to society. Give me the least student of the law, that is not capable to draw up a moral code as pure as that of Plato's republic. But this is not the only point in debate. The business is to suit this code in such a manner to the people for whom it is framed, and to the matters ordained therein, that the execution thereof shall follow naturally from the sole concurrence of these relations; which is following Solon's example, in compiling such laws, as are not indeed the best in themselves, but the best the people can bear under such and such circumstances: otherwise it is much better that disorders should continue, than be prevented or provided against by laws, which are not to be observed; for besides not redressing the evil, it is exposing the law to contempt.

Another, and not less important, observation, is that matters of morality and universal justice, are not regulated like those of particular justice and strict right, by laws and edicts: or if the laws have sometimes an influence on manners, it is when they derive their whole force from that spring. In such a case they return that very force, by a kind of re-action well known to true politicians. The first act of authority the Ephori of Sparta did after they entered upon their office, was to issue out a proclamation, enjoining the people, not

to observe, but to love the laws, to the end that it might be no hardship to observe them. This proclamation was not an empty form, but shewed the spirit of the Spartan education, where the laws and manners being deeply imprinted in the hearts of the people, formed, as it were, but one body. But let us not flatter ourselves ever to see Sparta revive in the bosom of commerce and sordid gain. Had we the same maxims, a theatre might be erected at Geneva without any sort of risk; for never would any of its citizens resort to this entertainment.

How then can government have an influence on manners? My answer is, by the public opinion. As our habits arise from our own opinions in retirement, in society they are owing to those of others. When we live in society, it is the judgment of our fellow-members that determines our actions: nothing appears good or desirable to private people, but what the public has judged such; and the only happiness most men know, is to be esteemed happy.

With regard to the choice of proper means for directing the public opinion, this is another question, which it would be of no use to resolve for you, neither is this a proper place to resolve it for the multitude. I shall be content with shewing, by a very striking example, that these means are neither laws nor punishments, nor any sort of coercive methods. This example is just under your eye; for I borrow it from your own country: it is the tribunal of the marshals of France,

who are instituted supreme judges of the point of honour.

What then was the intent of this institution? To change the public opinion in regard to duels, that is, to the reparation of injuries, and to the occasions in which a gentleman is obliged to have recourse to his sword, upon pain of infamy, in order to obtain satisfaction for an injury done him. Thence it follows,

In the first place, that as force has no power upon the mind, a tribunal founded for operating this change, should banish even the least appearance of violence. Even this word *tribunal* was improper: I should prefer that of *court of honour*. Its only arms ought to be honour and disgrace: no rewards, no corporal punishment, no prison, no arrest, no guards. Only a beadle should make his summons, by touching the accused with a white rod; but no other constraint to bring him before the court. True it is, that not to appear within a certain time before these judges, would be confessing they had no honour, and signing their own sentence. Hence naturally should result a mark of infamy, such as degradation of nobility, incapacity of serving the king in his courts or armies, with other punishments of the same kind, which naturally depend on, or are a necessary effect of opinion.

Secondly, it follows, that to eradicate the public prejudice, it was requisite there should be judges of great authority on the matters in question; and in this respect, the founder entered perfectly into the spirit of the institution: for in
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a military nation, I want to know who are the best judges of a proper occasion of shewing courage, or of demanding satisfaction for injured honour, but veterans adorned with military titles; veterans grown grey with laurels; veterans who have a hundred times proved, at the expence of their blood, that they know full well when it is their duty to spill it?

Thirdly, it follows, that as nothing is more independent on the supreme power than public judgment, the sovereign ought to take care, above all things, not to mix his arbitrary decisions with the decrees made to represent, and what is more, to determine this judgment. On the contrary, he should endeavour to raise the court of honour above himself, as subject to its venerable decrees. He ought not therefore to have begun with condemning all duellists indistinctly; this was setting up a shocking opposition all at once betwixt honour and the law: for even the law cannot oblige a man to dishonour himself. If the public are of opinion, that such a man is a poltroon, in vain will it be for the king, with all his power, to declare him brave; nobody will believe a word of it: and this fellow, who was looked upon as a poltroon, and who wants to be respected by force, will only be the more despised. As to what the edicts say, that to fight a duel is offending God, this is a very pious opinion without doubt: but the civil magistrate is not a judge of consciences; and whenever the supreme authority would interpose in disputes between honour and religion, it runs a risk of exposing itself on both sides. Neither do those edicts reason better, in

saying, that instead of fighting, we ought to address ourselves to the marshals: thus to condemn all duels without distinction or reserve, is to begin with previously determining what is referred to their judgment. It is very well known, that marshals are not allowed to grant a duel, even when injured honour can have no other satisfaction; and there are many such cases, according to the prejudices of the world: for as to the ceremonious satisfactions which may be offered to the person injured, these are mere children's play.

Suppose a man has a right to accept of a reparation for himself, and to forgive his enemy, this maxim artfully managed may insensibly get the better of the opposite barbarous prejudice: but it is otherwise when the honour of others, with whom ours is connected, happens to be attacked; then there is no possibility of making it up. If my father has had a box on the ear, if my sister, my wife, or my mistress is insulted, shall I preserve my honour, by making a cheap market of theirs? No marshals, no accommodation will do: I must either revenge the affront, or be dishonoured; and the edicts leave no other choice, but punishment or infamy. To produce an example that makes for my purpose, is it not an odd sort of contrast between the spirit of the theatre, and that of the laws, that people should applaud the very same Cid on the stage, who would be hanged at the Greve?

Therefore it is all in vain; neither reason, nor virtue, nor laws, will prevail over the public opinion, so long as there is no contrivance to
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change it. Once more I say it, force will not do. The present method would be of no use, were it put in practice, but to punish brave fellows, and to encourage cowards; but fortunately it is too absurd to be used, and has contributed only to change the name of duels. What then should have been done? I humbly apprehend, that single combats should have been absolutely submitted to the jurisdiction of the marshals, in order either to judge, or to prevent, or even to permit them. They should not only have been invested with a right to grant them the liberty of fighting when it was thought proper; but it would have been of importance for them sometimes to make use of this right, were it only to obviate a vulgar notion, which is very difficult to destroy, and alone subverts their whole authority, namely, that in affairs which come before their court, they determine less according to their own opinion, than to the will of the prince. Then there would be no shame in asking leave to fight upon a necessary occasion; nor would there be any in declining to fight, when the reasons for granting it were not judged sufficient: but it would be always a disgrace to say to them; I am affronted, I beg you will contrive to excuse me from fighting.

By this method, all private challenges would infallibly be discredited, when honour being able to defend itself in case of an affront, and courage being also able to shew itself in the field of honour, there would be very just reason to suspect

suspect such as had privately fought, and when those whom the court of honour had judged to have fought wrongfully (*a*), should be tried as vile assassins, by criminal courts. I grant, that as several duels would not be judged till too late, and others would be solemnly authorized, this would be attended in the beginning with the loss of a great many brave men: but still it would be the way afterwards to save an infinite number of lives; whereas, from the effusion of blood in defiance of the king's edicts, there results a reason to spill more.

What would have been the consequence afterwards? In proportion as the court of honour acquired authority over the opinion of the people, by its prudent decisions, it would gradually grow more severe, till the just occasions of fighting were reduced to nothing at all; then the point of honour would change its principles, and duels would be entirely abolished. Princes have not indeed been at all this trouble; but then they have made a regulation to no sort of purpose. If duels are more rare in our times, it is not that they are either despised or punished; it is because there has been a revolution of manners (*b*): and a strong

(*a*) *Wrongfully*, that is, not only cowardly and taking unfair advantage; but unjustly, and without sufficient reason; which would be naturally presumed of every affair that was not brought before this court.

(*b*) Formerly people used to quarrel in taverns; now they have taken a dislike to this coarse pleasure, by finding an easy access to private houses. Formerly they cut one another's

strong proof that this revolution ariseth from causes quite different, in which the government has no share; and, that the public opinion has not at all altered on this article, is, that after all this ill judged precaution, a gentleman that does not demand satisfaction for an affront, at the point of his sword, is still as infamous as ever.

A fourth consequence of the same establishment is, that as no gentleman can go through life without honour, all conditions that wear a sword, from the prince to the common soldier, and even all that do not wear one, ought to be subject to the jurisdiction of this court; some to give an account of their conduct and behaviour, others of their conversation and principles; all equally liable to be honoured or stigmatized, according to the conformity or opposition of their lives or sentiments to the principles of honour established in the nation, and insensibly reformed by the tribunal, agreeably to those of justice and reason. To confine this jurisdiction to the nobility and the gentlemen of the army, is to cut off the branches, and to leave the root: for if the point

her's throat for a mistress; by living in greater familiarity with the sex, they have since discovered that it is not worth while to fight for them. Take away women and wine, and there are very few important subjects of quarrel. At present, the generality of people fight only about gaming. The gentlemen of the army fight for court favours, or that they may not be obliged to quit the service. In this knowing age, every man can calculate within a crown, what his honour and life are worth.

of honour makes the nobility act, it makes the people speak; the former fight only, because the latter are their judges; and to change those actions which have the public esteem for their object, we must previously change the judgment of the public. I am satisfied, that we shall never be able to effect these revolutions, without consulting the women, on whom in great measure depends the manner of thinking among men.

From this principle it follows likewise, that the tribunal ought to be more or less formidable to different conditions, in proportion as they have more or less honour to lose, according to vulgar notions, by which in this case we must ever be directed. If the establishment is well founded, princes and grandees ought to tremble at the very name of the court of honour. Upon the first erecting of this tribunal, all the personal quarrels then existing among the principal nobility of the kingdom, should be referred to its decision; the judges should ultimately pronounce sentence upon them, as far as possible, by the sole laws of honour; these sentences should be severe; there should be cessions or resignations of precedence and rank, personal and independent of the privilege of places; there should be a prohibition to wear arms, or to appear before the prince, or some such penalties, which are nothing in themselves, but grievous in imagination, down to infamy inclusively, which might be looked upon as the capital punishment decreed by the court of honour; all these penalties should, by the concurrence of the supreme authority, have the

the same effect as the public judgment naturally hath, when its decisions are not annulled by force; the court should not pass sentence upon trifles, and never do things by halves; the king himself should have been summoned before it, when he threw his cane out of the window, for fear, as he said, of striking a gentleman (*a*); he should have appeared in court with the other party, and then been solemnly tried, and condemned to make the gentleman a reparation for the affront offered him indirectly; at the same time the court should determine an honourable prize to the monarch for moderating his passion. This prize should be something very simple, but conspicuous, for the king to wear all his life, which in my opinion would be a more honourable ensign to him than that of royalty, and I make no doubt but it would be the subject of many a poet's song. Certain it is, that in regard to honour, kings themselves are most of all subject to public judgment, consequently they may, without demeaning themselves, appear before the court that represents it. Lewis XIV. was fit to make an institution of this kind, and I believe he would have done it, had it been suggested to him.

With all these, and the like precautions, still it is very doubtful whether such an institution would succeed, because it is entirely contrary to the spirit of monarchy; but it is very certain, that by neglecting some such means, and attempting

(*a*) M. de Lauzun. Here, in my opinion, the cane is nobly applied.

to intermix force and laws in a matter of prejudice, and to change the notion of honour by violence, the royal authority has been endangered, and laws which exceed their power have been exposed to contempt.

And yet what was this prejudice, which they wanted to destroy? It was the most wild and barbarous notion that ever entered into the human mind, namely, that every duty of society is supported by bravery; that a man is no longer a cheat, a rascal, or a scoundrel, when he can fight; that falsehood is changed into truth; that theft becomes lawful, treachery commendable, disloyalty honourable, when they can be defended sword in hand; that an affront or injury is always sufficiently repaired by the thrust of a sword, and that we are never in the wrong with regard to another man, provided we kill him. There is, I acknowledge, another kind of fighting, where politeness is mixed with cruelty, and where they kill people only by chance; this is when they fight in the first heat of blood. In the first heat of blood! Good God! And what makes thee thirst so after another man's blood, thou savage beast! Dost thou want to drink it? Is it possible to think of these horrid cruelties without shivering? Such are the prejudices which the kings of France, with the whole force of the state, have attacked in vain. Opinion, the sovereign of mankind, is not subject to the power of kings; but they themselves are her principal slaves.

I finish this long digression, which unfortunately is not to be the last, and from this example,

too striking perhaps, *Si parva licet componere magnis*, I return to applications of a more simple nature. One effect that would infallibly follow from erecting a theatre in such a small city as ours, would be to change our maxims, or if you will call them so, our prejudices and public opinions; which would necessarily change our present manners, whether for better or worse, I will not say, but surely for others less suitable to our constitution. Now I would fain know, Sir, by what laws you would effectually guard against this inconveniency? If a government can greatly influence the manners of the people, it is only by its primitive institution: when once it has determined those manners, not only it has no longer the power to alter them, unless it undergoes a revolution itself; but it will find a very great difficulty in preserving them against the unavoidable accidents by which they are continually attacked, and their natural bias to change. Public opinions, though so difficult to govern, are in themselves of a very mutable nature. Chance, a thousand fortuitous causes, and unforeseen circumstances, will bring about what force and reason cannot; or rather, it is because chance directs them that force is ineffectual: just as in a throw of dice, let the impulse of the hand be never so strong, it will not be in the least the more effectual towards hitting the lucky point.

The most that human wisdom can do, is to prevent changes, and carefully to guard against every thing that is likely to produce them; but as soon as they are suffered or authorized, it is very
feldom

feldom that the magistrates can controll, and indeed they are never sure of controlling, their effects. How then shall we prevent those, whose cause has been owing to ourselves? Would you, in imitation of the institution I have been speaking of, propose the appointing of censors? We have censors already (a), and if the whole authority of this tribunal is scarce able to maintain us in our present state; when once we had added another inclination to the natural bias of our manners, what is it that could stop them? It is evident nothing could. The first mark of their being incapable to prevent the abuses of a play-house, would be to suffer it to be opened at all. And it is easy to foresee, that these two establishments could not subsist long together; for either the comedians would turn the censors into ridicule, or the censors would chase away the comedians.

But the point in question, is not only in regard to the insufficiency of laws for checking corrupt manners, without removing their cause: some will further observe, that my mind, being prepossessed with the abuses that necessarily arise from a play-house, and with the general impossibility of preventing them, I have not directly made answer to the expedient proposed; which was, to have a set of honest comedians, that is, to make them such. In the main, this separate discussion is not very necessary; all that I have hitherto said of the effects of comedy, being independent of

(a) The consistory, and the chamber of reformation.

the manners of the comedians, the objection against this entertainment would still be the same, were they even to have improved by those lessons which you exhort us to give them; and were they become, through our extraordinary care, so many patterns of virtue: yet the regard I have for such of my countrymen, as see no other danger from a play-house, than the bad example of the comedians, induces me to enquire further, whether, even in their supposition, this expedient has any probability of success; and whether it ought to be sufficient to make them easy.

I shall begin with observing facts, before I reason on causes; and here I find in general, that the life of a comedian is a state of licentiousness and immorality; that the actors give themselves up to all manner of debauchery; that the actresses lead most scandalous lives; that they are all avaricious; and prodigal at the same time; ever in debt, and ever extravagant; heedless in regard to expending their money, and indelicate in regard to the manner of getting it. I find moreover, that in all countries their profession is dishonourable: that they who follow it, excommunicated or not, are every where despised (a); and that

(a) When the English interred the celebrated Mrs. Oldfield near their kings, it was not her profession, but her abilities they honoured. With them, great parts ennoble the meanest profession; and want of those parts, renders even the very best contemptible. And with regard to the comedians in particular, the low and indifferent of this profession, are despised in London, as much or rather more than any where else.

even at Paris, where they are less undervalued, and behave better than elsewhere, a burgher would be afraid to keep company with those very comedians, who are every day seen at the tables of the great. A third observation, of equal importance, is that this contempt is stronger in all places, in proportion to the greater purity of manners; and there are countries remarkable for innocence and simplicity, where the profession of a comedian is held almost in detestation. These are incontestable facts. You will tell me they are owing to prejudice. I grant you: but as this prejudice is general, we must search for a general cause of it; and I do not see that we shall be able to find it any where, except in the very profession itself. You will reply, that the reason why comedians render themselves contemptible, is, because they are contemned: but why should they have been contemned, if they had not been deserving of it? why should people entertain a worse opinion of a player than of other professions, had there been nothing to distinguish them? This is what we ought, perhaps, to examine into, before we justify them at the expence of the public.

I might, indeed, impute this prejudice to the declamations of priests, had I not found it also established among the Romans before the birth of Christianity, and not only current in the minds of the people, but authorized by express laws, which declared actors infamous, deprived them of the title and privileges of Roman citizens; and placed actresses in the rank of common prostitutes. No other reason can be given for this infamy,

infamy, except that derived from the nature of the thing. The Pagan priests, and the devotees, were more favourable than averse to public spectacles, because these made part of the diversions consecrated to religion (a): they had no interest to rail against them; nor, indeed, was it their practice: yet, at that time, people might complain, as you do, of the absurdity of despising men who were protected, and paid by the public. This, however, does not appear to me so absurd as it may to you: for it is proper, sometimes, a government should encourage dishonourable but useful professions; and yet they, who follow such professions, shall have not the more right to be respected on that account.

I have read somewhere, that this ignominy was not thrown upon real comedians, but upon the *bistriones*, or actors of interludes, and farces, who stained their entertainments with indecency and obscenity: but this distinction cannot be maintained; for the words *comædus* and *bistrion* were perfectly synonymous, and had no other difference but that one was Greek and the other Hetruscan. Cicero, in his Dialogue de Oratore, gives the name of *bistriones* to the two greatest actors that ever appeared at Rome, Æsop and Roscius; and in his oration for the latter, he laments that so worthy a man should ever follow so base a profession. The

(a) Livy says, that the *Ludi Scenici* were introduced into Rome, in the year 396, to appease the gods in time of a plague. In our days, the play-houses would be shut up upon the same occasion; and surely this would be much more agreeable to reason.

law, so far from distinguishing between players, and actors of interludes and farces, or even between tragedians and comedians, stamps indiscriminately, the same mark of disgrace on all those who mount the stage. *Quisquis in scenam prodierit, ait prætor, infamis est.* True it is, that this ignominy did not affect the representation itself, so much as the state or condition of the representer; since the Roman youth publicly acted *Atellane* or *Exodia*, at the end of the great theatrical pieces, without any dishonour. This instance excepted, we find, on a thousand occasions, that all comedians indifferently were slaves, and treated as such, whenever the public was dissatisfied with their behaviour.

I know but of one nation, whose way of thinking on this subject was different from that of the rest of the world; and these were the Greeks. There is no sort of doubt, but with them to appear on the stage was so far from being infamous, that Greece furnishes us with instances of actors, employed in public functions, both at home, and abroad. But the reasons of this exception are obvious. 1. As tragedy, as well as comedy, was a Greek invention, these people could not immediately throw a mark of contempt upon a profession, without knowing what effect it would produce, and when they began to know this effect, the public opinion had already taken its turn. 2. As there was something sacred in the original of tragedy, those who performed in this sort of drama, were considered rather as priests than players. 3. The subjects of their plays

plays being borrowed from their own antiquities, of which the Greeks were extravagantly fond, they looked upon their players, not so much in the light of men who acted in fabulous entertainments, as of ingenious citizens who instructed the people in the history of their country by means of theatrical representations. 4. The Greeks were enthusiasts in regard to liberty, to such a degree, as to look upon themselves as the only people by nature free; and they felt a high pleasure in recalling to their memories the misfortunes of ancient times, or the crimes of their former masters. By these great exhibitions they were continually instructed, and they could not help shewing some respect to the instruments of this instruction. 5. As tragedy in the beginning was acted by none but men, there was no such thing to be seen on their stage, as that scandalous mixture of men and women, who turn our theatres into schools of immorality. 6. Lastly, their public entertainments were not near so pitiful as those of our days. Their theatres were not raised for interest or avarice; they were not confined to dark dungeons; the actors had no occasion to lay the audience under contribution, nor to tell exactly the number of people they saw come into the house, for fear of losing a meal.

Those grand, those pompous entertainments were exhibited in open day, in the presence of a whole nation; they were confined entirely to combats, to victories, to prizes, objects capable of inspiring the Greeks with an ardent emulation, and with

glowing sentiments of honour and glory. It was in the midst of this grand solemnity, so well adapted to raise and to warm the soul, that the actors, animated with the same zeal, divided oftentimes among the first men of the nation, the honours assigned to the victors at public games. I am not therefore surprized, that their profession, exercised in this manner, far from dishonouring them, should inspire them with an undaunted courage and noble disinterestedness, by which the actor seemed frequently to be raised to the sublimity of the person represented. But Greece, after all, if you except Sparta, was never cited as an example of good morals; and as Sparta would not suffer a theatre, surely it could pay no great regard to those who followed this profession.

Let us return to the Romans, who, far from imitating the Greeks in this respect, set quite a contrary example. When they declared comedians infamous by law, was it with a view to dishonour the profession? Of what use would so cruel a decree have been? No; they did not dishonour the profession, they only gave open testimony of the dishonour inseparable from it: for good laws never alter the nature of things, they only are guided by it; and such laws alone are observed. The point is not therefore to cry out against prejudices; but to know first of all whether these are really prejudices; whether the profession of a comedian is not in itself dishonourable; for if such it should unfortunately prove, in vain would it be for us to determine it is not; instead

instead of vindicating its reputation, we should only bring disgrace on ourselves.

What is then the so much boasted ability of a comedian? It is the art of counterfeiting, of assuming a strange character, of appearing different from what he really is, of flying into a passion in cold blood, of saying what he does not think as naturally as if he really did think it; in short, of forgetting his own station to personate that of others. What is this profession of a comedian? A trade by which a man exhibits himself in public with a mercenary view; a trade by which he submits to ignominies and affronts from people, who think they have purchased a right to treat him in this manner; a trade, in short, by which he exposes his person to public sale. I conjure every ingenuous man to tell me, whether he is not conscious in the bottom of his heart, that this traffic has something in it servile and base. You philosophers, who pretend to be superior to the prejudices of the vulgar, would not you all die for shame, if meanly metamorphosing yourselves into kings, you were obliged to act a character so different from your own, and to expose your sacred persons to the insolence of the vulgar? What sort of spirit is it then that a comedian imbibes from his condition? A mean spirit, a spirit of falsehood, pride, and low ridicule, which qualifies him for acting every sort of character, except the noblest of all, that of man, which he lays aside.

I am not ignorant, that the action of a comedian is not like that of a cheat, who wants to

impose upon you; that he does not pretend you should take him for the real person he represents; or that you should think him actuated by the passions which he only imitates: I know also, that by giving this imitation for what it really is, he renders it altogether innocent. Therefore I do not absolutely charge him with being a cheat, but with making it his whole business to cultivate the art of deception, and with practising it in habits, which, though innocent perhaps on the stage, must every where else be subservient to vice. Those fellows so genteely equipped, and so well practised in the theory of gallantry and whining, will they never make use of this art to seduce the young and innocent? Those lying valets, so nimble with their tongue and fingers on the stage, so artful in supplying the necessities of a profession more expensive than profitable, will they never try their abilities off the stage? Will they never take the purse of an extravagant son, or a miserly father for that of Leander or Argan? The temptation of doing evil increaseth all the world over in proportion to the opportunity; and comedians must be honefter by far than the rest of mankind, if they are not more corrupt.

The orator and the preacher, you will say, expose their persons in public, as well as the comedian. There is a very great difference. When the orator appears in public, it is to speak, and not to exhibit himself as a show: he represents only his own person, he acts only his own proper part, he speaks only in his own name, he says, or he ought to say, no more than he really thinks: as
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the man and the character are the same being, he is in his right place; he is in the case of every other citizen that discharges the duties of his station. But a player is a person who delivers himself upon the stage in sentiments not his own; who says only what he is made to say; who oftentimes represents a chimerical being: consequently he is lost, as it were, in his heroe; and when he thus forgets the man, if there is any vestige of him remaining, it is only a laughing-stock to the audience. What shall I say of those who seem apprehensive of being too much respected in their native colours, and therefore degrade themselves so far as to act in characters, which they would be extremely sorry to resemble in real life? It is doubtless a sad thing to see such a number of villains in the world, who pass for honest men: but what can be more odious, more shocking, or more base, than to see an honest comedian acting the part of a villain, and exerting his whole abilities to establish criminal maxims, which he sincerely detests in his own heart?

All this shews there is something dishonourable in the profession; but there is still another source of corruption in the debauched manners of the actresses, which necessarily draws after it the same immorality in the actors. Yet why should this immorality be inevitable? Why, say you! at any other time there would be no occasion to ask this question; but in this present age, when prejudice and error reign triumphantly under the specious name of philosophy, mankind, intoxicated by their
empty

empty learning, are grown deaf to the voice of human reason, as well as nature.

In all countries, and in all conditions of life, there is so strong and so natural a connection between the two sexes, that the manners of the one ever determine those of the other. Not that these manners are always the same, but they have always the same degree of goodness, modified in each sex by their own peculiar inclinations. In England the women are gentle and timid: the men are rough and bold. Whence comes this seeming opposition? It is because the character of each sex is thus heightened; and it is natural for this nation to carry every thing to extremes. This excepted, in other respects they are alike. The two sexes chuse to live asunder; they are both fond of good eating; both retire after dinner, the men to the bottle, the women to tea; both sit down to play without any violent eagerness, and seem to make rather a trade of it than a passion; both have a great respect for decency; both do honour to the conjugal vow; and if ever they violate their fidelity, they do not boast of the violation; they are both fond of domestic quiet; they are both remarkable for taciturnity; they are both difficult to move; they are both hurried by their passions; in both love is terrible and tragical, it determines the fate of their days, the consequence is nothing less, says Muralt, than to lose either their reason or life; finally, they are both fond of the country, and the English ladies are as well delighted in wandering alone
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in their parks, as in shewing themselves at Vauxhall. From this general taste for solitude, ariseth that for meditation, and romances, with which England is over-run (a). Thus both sexes, more recollected within themselves, are less influenced by foolish modes, have a greater relish for the real pleasures of life, and study less to appear, than to be, happy.

I have quoted the English through preference, because of all nations in the world, there is none where the manners of the two sexes seem to differ more at first sight. From the relation between men and women in that country, we may conclude for every other. The whole difference consists in this, that the life of the females continually shews their manners; whereas that of the men being more lost in the uniformity of business, you cannot judge rightly of them without seeing them in their pleasures. If you would therefore know the men, you must study the women. This is a general maxim, and so far all the world will agree with me. But if I should add, that the virtues of the fair sex are to be found no where but in a retired life; that the peaceful care of a family is their peculiar province; that their dignity consists in modesty; that bashfulness is the inseparable companion of chastity; that to court the looks of men is a proof of corruption; and that every woman, who is fond of shewing her

(a) These are like the people, either excellent or detestable. Never was there a romance equal to, or even near so beautiful as Clarissa, in any language whatever.

charms,

charms, brings dishonour on her person : instantly I hear the noise of this new-fangled philosophy, which has its rise and declension in the corner of a large city, and would fain stifle the voice of nature and all mankind.

These are vulgar errors, they cry : puerile notions ! Prejudices of laws and education ! Modesty has no foundation in nature ; it is only a contrivance of society to secure the privileges of fathers and husbands, and to maintain some order in families. Why should we blush at the wants we receive from nature ? Why should we find reason to be ashamed at an act, so indifferent in itself, and so useful in its effects, as that which contributes to perpetuate the species ? Since the desires are equal on both sides, why should there be any difference in disclosing them ? Why should one sex be less ready than the other to comply with inclinations common to both ? Why should man in this respect have any other laws than those of brutes ?

These why's, says le Dieu, will never have an end.

Yet it is not to man, but to his maker, such questions should be addressed. Is it not very ridiculous, that I should be obliged to tell the reason of my being ashamed of a natural sensation, if this shame is as natural to me as the sensation itself ? You might as well ask me, how I come to have this sensation ? Is it my business to account for what nature does ? According to this
way

way of reasoning, they who do not see why man exists, ought to deny his existence.

I am greatly afraid, that these searchers into the divine counsels, have but very superficially weighed his reasons. I, who do not pique myself upon any discoveries of this kind, think I see some that have escaped their enquiry. Let them say what they will, that shame which conceals the rites of love from every prying eye, has some foundation. It is the safeguard which nature has given to both sexes, to protect them in a state of weakness and self oblivion, when they are entirely at the mercy of the first comer: thus it covers their slumbers with the veil of night, to the end, that during this time of obscurity, they may be less exposed to hostile attacks: thus it prompts every animal in pain to seek for shelter in lonely places, that it may die in peace, out of the reach of enemies, whom it is no longer able to resist.

With regard to the bashfulness of the fair in particular, could nature have given a better armour to that sex, whom she framed to act upon the defensive? The desires, you say, are equal! What do you mean by this? Is there on both sides the same power to satisfy them? What would become of the human species, if the order of attack and defence were changed? The assailant might chance to pitch upon a time, when it would be impossible to succeed; the assailed would be let alone, when it were proper for him to surrender; or continually harassed, when he would be too weak to resist; in a word, power and will
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being ever at variance, and never suffering the desires to be divided, love would no longer be the support, but the scourge and destroyer of nature.

Had the two sexes been equal in making and receiving advances, the importunity of lovers would not be preserved; Cupid's fire being never fanned in such sluggish freedom, would soon be extinguished; the most delicious of all human passions would scarce touch the heart, and the intent thereof would not be fulfilled. The difficulty which seems to remove this object, is the very thing that brings it near. Desires, veiled by blushes, grow only the more bewitching; the modest cheek does but inflame them. The fears, the shifts, the reserves, the timid confessions, the tender and artless delicacy of the bashful lover, disclose what he thinks to conceal, and are the most expressive language of passion. It is the modest blush that enhances favours, and softens denials. Love in reality possesses what the bashful maid only seems to contest; and this mixture of weakness and modesty renders the passion more tender and moving; the less it obtains, the more it values what has been granted; and thus it enjoys at the same time its privations and its pleasures.

Why, say they, should that which is not shameful to man, be so to woman? Why should one of the sexes look upon that as a crime, which the other thinks lawful? What a question? Just as if the consequences were the same on both sides! As if all the severe duties of a wife were
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not derived from this only, that a child must have a father. Even if these important considerations were wanting, still we should have the same answer to make, and it would be always without reply: thus was nature pleased to ordain, and it is a crime to stifle her voice. Man may be forward and bold, nature designed him to be such (a): for one of the sexes must declare.

But

(a) Let us distinguish between this boldness, and brutal insolence; for nothing can proceed from sensations more opposite, nor has more contrary effects. I suppose a free innocent love, that receives no laws but from itself; a love that presides over its own mysteries, and forms an union of persons, as well as hearts. If a man insults a modest woman, or uses violence to a lovely maid, who feels no affection for him, this is not called passion, but brutal lust; it betrays a soul void of delicacy and manners, incapable of love or honour. The highest value of the pleasures of love is in the heart that grants them; a true lover would find nothing but vexation and despair, even in the possession of the object he loves, did he not think he was beloved again.

He who would satisfy his desires, without the consent of the person that raised them, has the insolence and brutality of a satyr: but he who knows how to express his desires without offending, how to render them interesting or engaging, how to act so as the person he loves shall have an equal share of affection with him, how to subdue his passions before he attacks the object, he, I say, who acts in this manner, may be said to behave with manly boldness. It is not as yet enough to be beloved; the inspiring the object with equal desires, confers no right to satisfy them; the will must also consent. In vain does the heart grant what the will refuses. The man of honour and the lover abstain from this favour, even when

But every woman that throws aside the veil of modesty, is vicious and depraved; because she tramples upon a natural sensation, the proper characteristic of her sex.

And how can any man dispute the reality of this sensation? Does not every country in the universe bear witness to it? and is not the very comparison of the two sexes sufficient to prove its existence? Is it not nature that bedecks the countenance of young damsels with those soft features, which a modest blush renders still more engaging? Is it not she that arms their eyes with timid, and yet melting looks, which we find so difficult to resist? Is it not she that has formed their complexion more delicate, and their skin of a finer texture, to the end that it might easier disclose the virgin blush? Is it not she that made them so fearful, that they may fly from us; and so weak, that they may be obliged to yield? Why should she have given them a heart more sensible to pity, with less nimbleness of feet, less robustness of body, less height of stature, and greater delicacy of muscles, unless she designed they should submit to man? Subject as they are to

when it is in their power to obtain it. To extort this tacit consent, is all the violence permitted in love. To read it in the fair one's eyes, to see it in her air, notwithstanding the contrary declaration in words, is the lover's art; if then he completes his happiness, he is not guilty of brutality, but behaves with honour; and instead of affronting the modest maid, he reveres, and serves her; he leaves her the honour of defending still what perhaps she would have yielded of her own accord.

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the inconveniencies of pregnancy, and to the pains of child-bearing, did this increase of labour require a diminution of strength? But to reduce them to this painful state, it was requisite they should be so strong, as not to yield without their own consent; and so weak, as to have always a pretext for yielding. This is exactly the point where nature has placed them.

From reason let us pass to experience. If modesty were a prejudice of society and education, it ought to be stronger in places where education is more refined, and where the inhabitants are continually improving in social laws; as it ought to be weaker wherever mankind have been least civilized, and where they continue in a state nearer to that of nature. But we find quite the contrary (a). In the mountains of our country, the women are timid and bashful, a single word makes them blush, they dare not lift up their eyes at the men, nor do they open their mouths in their presence. But in great cities, bashfulness is ignoble and base; it is the only thing that a lady would be ashamed of; and the honour of making a gentleman blush belongs to women of the highest breeding.

The argument borrowed from the example of brutes concludes nothing; neither is it true. Man is not a dog or a wolf. There needs no

(a) I expect an objection. Among savages the women have no modesty; for they go naked. I answer, that our women have less, they go dressed. See the conclusion of this essay, with regard to the Spartan maids.

more than the first relations of society, to give a moral quality to our sensations; which could never be the case with brutes. Though brutes have a heart, and have passions; yet the sacred image of virtue was never imprinted but on the heart of man.

And yet, where do you find that instinct never produceth effects in brute animals, similar to those which shame produceth in man? Every day I find instances to the contrary. I see some brutes hide themselves on certain occasions, in order to remove a disagreeable object out of sight; and afterwards, instead of running away, I see them endeavour to cover even the appearance of it. Here I perceive in every respect the air of decency, and such would this precaution be called, if it was taken by man. In their amours I see little capricious toys, with assents and refusals which seem concerted, and greatly partake of the nature of irritating the passion. The very instant I am writing this, I have present to my eye an example that confirms it. Two young doves, in the happy season of their first loves, present me with an idea extremely different from that brutal lust, which our pretended sages attribute to this innocent pair. The white turtle follows her beloved step by step, and flies away as soon as ever he turns about. If he takes no notice of her, with gentle billings she excites him to play; if he retires, she follows him; if he defends himself, she flies back five or six paces, and draws him on again: thus the pretty creature manages her decoys,

decoys, and her gentle resistance, with as much art, as could hardly be expected from the most practised coquette. Not the giddy Galatea could act it better; and Virgil might have borrowed one of his finest images from a dove-house.

Even could it be denied, that a particular sense of shame was natural to the sex, still would it be less true that their province in social life ought to be retirement and domestic oeconomy, and that they should be trained up in principles relative to these branches? If the fear, modesty and shame, by which their sex is so agreeably distinguished, are human inventions, it greatly behoves society, that every woman should acquire and cultivate these qualities; and she that refuses to comply with them, should be deemed to act against the rules of morality. Can there be in nature a more engaging, a more beautiful sight, than the mother of a family encircled by her children, regulating the several tasks of her domestics, endeavouring to make her husband easy and happy in his situation, and directing the whole oeconomy of her house with the utmost prudence? There it is that the discreet wife appears in all her glory, that she really commands respect, and that beauty justly shares the tribute paid to virtue. When the mistress of a family rambles abroad, her house is like a lifeless body which is soon corrupted: she herself loses her chief lustre, and appears to a disadvantage, being stripped of her native ornaments. If she is married, what business has she among men? If she is single, why

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does she run the risk, by her indecent deportment, of shocking the man who would be inclined to make her his wife? Let her do what she will, it is plain she is out of her sphere when she goes abroad; and even her beauty, which pleases the eye, without engaging the heart, renders her the more open to censure. Whether this impression comes from nature or education, it is common to all nations; they all respect the women for their modesty; they are all convinced, that when the fair sex neglect their manners, they likewise neglect their duty; they all can see, that when the women would put on a manly assurance, they turn it into effrontery, and demeaning themselves by this odious imitation, they are a disgrace both to their own sex and ours.

I am sensible, that in some countries there are customs contrary to what I have been observing; but then you see what manners they have produced. I should desire no further example to confirm my principles. Let us apply to the manners of women, what we have mentioned already concerning the honour paid to the sex. In ancient times, the women in all civilized nations lived very retired; they seldom went abroad; they never walked out with men; they had not the best place at the theatre; they did not sit in full view (a); they were not even permitted to

(a) At the theatre at Athens, the women sat in an upper gallery, called *Cercis*, not at all convenient either for

go to all sorts of public entertainments; and it is well known, that it was pain of death for any of them to appear at the Olympic games.

At home they had a private apartment, which the men never entered. When their husbands entertained company to dinner, they seldom appeared at table; women of reputation went away before the end of the repast, and others did not shew themselves there at the beginning. There was no common place of meeting for the two sexes; nor did they spend the day together. Thus taking care not to be cloyed with one another's company, they met again with more pleasure; and it is very certain, that in those days, domestic peace was better established, and a greater harmony reigned among married people, than there does at present (a).

Such were the usages of the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and even of the Ægyptians, notwithstanding the illiberal jokes of Herodotus, which refute themselves. If the women sometimes exceeded the limits of this modesty, the public outcry shewed, that this was an exception. What have they not said against the liberty of the Spartan women? We may likewise understand

for seeing, or being seen; but it appears from the adventure of Valeria and Sylla, that in the circus at Rome, the women were intermixed with the men.

(a) We might attribute the cause hereof to the facility of divorces; but the Greeks rarely made use of this privilege, and Rome had stood five hundred years, before any body would take advantage of the law which permitted divorce.

by Aristophanes's *Lisistrata*, how greatly the Greeks in general were offended at the impudence of the Athenian women; and even in the corrupt state of Rome, were not the people scandalized to see the Roman ladies appearing before the tribunal of the triumviri?

Now every thing is changed. Upon the decline of the Roman empire, swarms of barbarians spread themselves like a torrent over Europe; their wives followed their armies, and attended them in the midst of their camps; this freedom, a consequence in great measure of the natural coldness of northern climates, which require less reserve, introduced another manner of living into Europe: this was further encouraged by books of chivalry, where the intire study of the ladies was to inspire the gentlemen with so warm a passion, as to place their whole happiness in carrying off the object of their desires. These books being the school of gallantry for the times, the people imbibed from thence a notion of free converse between the sexes, which was soon introduced into courts and great cities, where they pretend to most politeness; and this politeness, from the very nature of its progress, could not but degenerate at length into rudeness. Thus it is that the natural modesty of the sex vanished by degrees, and the manners of sutlers wives were communicated to women of quality.

Would you know how shocking these usages appear to those who are not accustomed to them? Judge by the surprize and confusion of foreigners and of country people, at the sight of these modern manners.

manners. This confusion does an honour to the women of their country; and it is very likely that they who occasion it, would be less proud of what they have done, did they but know its real cause. It is not that they strike them with awe, but rather that they make them blush; and when a woman by her speech and behaviour banisheth modesty, it flies for shelter to man's breast.

Let us return now to our actresses; I would fain know how is it possible for a profession, whose only aim is to appear in public, and what is worse, to appear for money; how is it possible, I say, for such a profession to suit virtuous women, and be consistent with modesty and good manners? Is there any occasion to dispute about the moral difference of the sexes, in order to be convinced how natural it is for a woman who exposes herself to sale upon the stage, to be ready to strike a bargain when the play is over, and to be strongly tempted to satisfy those desires, which she takes such great pains to excite? What! shall a prudent woman, who has used a thousand precautions to secure her virtue, find it difficult notwithstanding to preserve her innocence, when she is exposed to the least danger; and shall these forward girls, whose heads are filled with coquetry and amorous characters, whose dress is not the most decent (*a*), and who are continually solicited by brisk young fellows, in

(*a*) What shall we say, were they supposed to be handsome, as we have reason to expect? See the entertainments on the *natural son*, p. 183.

the midst of the soft sounds of love and pleasure; shall these girls, I say, at their age, and with their tender disposition, be able to withstand the objects that surround them, the speeches that continually allure them, the occasions that constantly return; and above all, the gold to which their hearts are already half sold? They must think we have the simplicity of children, to attempt to impose upon us so far. In vain does vice endeavour to conceal itself in obscurity; its image is stamped on guilty fronts; a woman's boldness is a sure mark of her infamy; it is because she has too much reason to blush, that she blushes no longer; and if shame sometimes surviveth chastity, what must we think of chastity, where shame itself is lost?

Let us suppose, if you will, that there are some exceptions; let us suppose,

That there are so many as three, whom we could name.

I am willing to believe what I never saw nor heard. Shall we call that an honest trade, which makes a modest woman a prodigy, and which prompts us to despise those who follow it, unless we depend on a constant miracle? So strongly is immodesty connected with their profession, and so sensible are they of it themselves, that there is not one of them all but would think it ridiculous to pretend to, or personally to assume those speeches of sobriety and virtue, which she deals out to the public. Lest these severe maxims should prejudice her interest, the actress is ever the
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first to parody her character, and to destroy her own work. So soon as she gets behind the scenes, she throws off her dignity, together with the moral of the theatre; and though she may give lessons of virtue on the stage, she quickly forgets them by her own fire side.

After what has been said, I think there is no further occasion to explain in what manner the loose behaviour of the actresses causeth that of the actors, especially as their profession obliges them to live in the greatest intimacy together. Neither have I need to prove, that from a dishonest profession, dishonest sentiments arise, nor that vice divides those whom common interest ought to unite. I shall also wave entering into a thousand subjects of discord, which the distribution of the characters, the dividing of the monies, the choice of plays, and jealousy of applause must continually excite, especially among the actresses; neither shall I touch upon the topic of gallantry and intrigue. Less occasion is there still for me to expose the effects, which the association of pride and beggary must inevitably produce among those people. I have already said too much for you, and for reasonable men; but never could I say enough for those who are determined not to see what their reason shews them, but only what suits either their passions or their prejudices.

If all this is essentially connected with the profession of a comedian, how shall we do, Sir, to prevent inevitable effects? For my part, I see but one way, which is to remove the cause. When
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distempers come upon a man, either from the nature of his constitution, or from a particular manner of living, which it is not in his power to alter, do physicians prevent those distempers? To forbid a comedian from being vicious, is to forbid a man from being sick.

Does it from thence follow, that we ought to despise all comedians? By no means: on the contrary it follows, that a player, of modest behaviour, and possessed withal of moral honesty, is, as you have very well observed, doubly valuable: since thereby he sheweth, that the love of virtue triumphs within his breast over human passions, and the ascendancy of his profession. The only fault he can be charged with is, his having embraced that kind of life; but it too often happens, that a slip of youth shall determine a man's fate in the world; and when a person has a real genius for the stage, how can he withstand the charm? Eminent actors carry their excuse about them; it is only the understrappers we ought to despise.

The reason of my continuing so long within the limits of the general proposition, was not because I should have found it less advantageous to apply it to the city of Geneva; but that I was loth to bring my countrymen on the carpet, which made me defer speaking of them as long as I could. Yet to this point must I come at last; and I should have performed my task but very indifferently, did I not endeavour from our particular situation to trace the consequences of opening

ing a playhouse in our city, should your advice and arguments induce the government to admit of such an entertainment. I shall confine myself to effects of so striking a nature, that no man, who is in the least acquainted with our constitution, will be able to contest them.

Geneva is rich, it is true; but though we have none of those monstrous disproportions of fortune, which impoverish a whole country, to enrich a few individuals, and which scatter the seeds of misery round the doors of the opulent; still it is certain, that if some of the inhabitants of Geneva are possessed of good fortunes, many of them live very hard; and that the affluence and ease of the greatest part, is more owing to constant labour, to oeconomy, and moderation, than to positive riches. There are many towns poorer than ours, where the people may give a greater loose to their pleasures, because the lands that supply them with bread, are never exhausted, and their time being of no value, they may lose it without any prejudice. This is not the case with us, who have no lands to support us, but are obliged to depend entirely on our industry. The people of Geneva maintain themselves absolutely by dint of labour, and are supplied with necessaries, merely by denying themselves superfluities: which is one of the reasons of our sumptuary laws. Strangers, upon their first entering Geneva, must be highly surprized at that bustle and appearance of business, which spreads itself through every quarter of the town. The people
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are all employed, all in motion, all in their respective occupations. I do not think that such a sight can be matched in any other small city in the universe. Go to the suburb of St. Gervais; and you imagine you see all the clock-work in Europe. Proceed thence to the *Molard*, and the low streets, and you see such an appearance of wholesale trade, viz. bales of goods in heaps, hogheads scattered about confusedly, and the fragrant odour of spices, as to fancy yourself in a sea-port town. At the pasture ground and the springs, the bustle and noise of the manufactures of printed callico and painted linen, seem to transport you to Zurich. The city is in some measure multiplied by the several manufactures; and I have known people, who at first sight reckoned the inhabitants at a hundred thousand. Manual labour, employment of time, vigilance, and rigid parsimony, these are the treasures of the citizens of Geneva: and are these to be exchanged for idle amusements, which shall rob us both of our time and money?

Geneva, you will grant me, does not contain four and twenty thousand souls. I find that Lyons, though far richer in proportion, and at least five or six times more populous, just maintains one theatre; and when there is an opera, the town is not well able to support it. I find that Paris, the capital of France, and the gulf that swallows up the riches of this great kingdom, maintains three playhouses, but very indifferently, and a fourth at a particular time of the year.

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Let us suppose this fourth (a) to be a standing theatre. I find, that out of upwards of six hundred thousand inhabitants, this rendezvous of the opulent and the idle, hardly supplies the playhouses every day with more than a thousand or twelve hundred spectators, all things considered. Running over the rest of the kingdom, I find that the great sea-ports of Bourdeaux and Rouen, and the large fortresses of Lille and Strasburg, fortresses full of idle officers, who spend their whole lives in waiting for twelve and eight o'clock, have each of them a playhouse; and even here they must have a tax to support them. But how many other cities incomparably larger than ours, and how many seats of parliament and sovereign courts, are unable to maintain a standing theatre?

To judge whether we are in a better condition to do it than they, let us take a known term of comparison, such for instance as the city of Paris. I say then, that if out of upwards of six hundred thousand inhabitants, the playhouses, reckoning one with another, are not supplied with above twelve hundred spectators; less than four and twenty thousand inhabitants at Geneva would not supply a theatre with more than forty-eight.

(a) If I do not reckon the spiritual concert, it is because it is only a supplement or appendix to the other entertainments. Neither do I reckon the little drolls exhibited at the fair; but I reckon it the whole year, whereas it lasts only six months. Inquiring, comparatively, whether it is possible for a company of comedians to subsist at Geneva, I suppose every where more reasons in favour of the affirmative, than appear from known facts.

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From this number we must also deduct those who are admitted gratis, and suppose further, that there are as many idle people in proportion at Geneva, as at Paris; a supposition, which to me does not appear to be true.

Now if the French comedians, who receive a pension from the king, and are proprietors of their own theatre, find it difficult to maintain themselves at Paris, notwithstanding that the house is filled every time they act with three hundred spectators (a), I should be glad to know, how will it be possible for the comedians of Geneva to subsist, having only an audience of forty-eight to depend upon? People live cheaper, say you, at Geneva, than at Paris. They do so; but then the playhouse tickets cost less in proportion; and besides, the table expence is no great matter to the comedians. It is their dress, their decorations, that run away with money; and all these things must be had from Paris, or some awkward workmen must be taught to make them at Geneva. But where these things are common, they are always made cheapest. You will say likewise, that they may be subjected to our sumptuary laws. But in vain would it be to extend

(a) They who go to the play only on holy days, when the houses are crowded, will find fault with this estimate; but they who have frequented the playhouse for ten years together, as I have done, on full houses or otherwise, will certainly allow that I have rather over-rated it. Therefore, if we are to diminish the daily number of 300 spectators at Paris, we must in proportion diminish that of the 48 at Geneva; which will strengthen my argument.

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our reform to the stage; Cleopatra and Xerxes would never relish such simplicity. As the business of a comedian requires rich dresses, it would be depriving him of a taste for his trade, to forbid those dresses; and I question whether there was ever a good actor, that would consent to turn quaker. Lastly, it may be said, that the company of comedians at Geneva, being less numerous than that at Paris, might subsist at a much less expence: I grant you; but will this difference be as the proportion of 48 to 300? Besides, a larger company has the advantage of acting oftener; whereas in a small number of players, where the double parts are wanting, they cannot all act every day; sickness, or the absence of a single player, will hinder the performance, and this is so much loss to the company.

The inhabitants of Geneva are excessively fond of a rural life: of this you may judge, by the great number of little country seats all round the town. The conveniency of hunting, and the beauty of the neighbouring meadows, encourage this useful practice. The gates are shut before night, which deprives the citizens of the liberty of walking out late in the evening; therefore as the country houses are so near, very few persons of easy fortune lie in town during the summer. Having spent the day in their respective business, they set out in the evening at the shutting of the gates, and betake themselves to their little retreat, there to breathe a purer air, and to enjoy the most delightful landskip under heaven. There are even a great many who reside in the country the whole year,

year, and have no dwelling-house in Geneva. All this would be a loss to the playhouse; and during the fine season of the year, there would hardly be any body in town but poor people, who could not afford money for such an entertainment. At Paris it is quite otherwise; one may very well go to the play, and lie in the country; for all summer long, as soon as the plays are over, you see multitudes of coaches driving out of town. With regard to those who live in Paris, they are not so much tempted by the liberty of going into the country at what hour they please, as discouraged by the inconveniencies of it. They are so soon tired of the public walks, they must go such a great way into the country, the air of the adjacent fields is so infected with ordure, and there is so little beauty in the prospect, that they chuse rather to shut themselves up in a playhouse. Here then is another difference to the disadvantage of our comedians, and one half of the year lost to their account. Do you think, Sir, they would find it an easy matter to fill up so great a space the rest of the year? For my part, I see no other remedy for this, than to change the hour of shutting our gates, to sacrifice our security to our pleasures, to leave a fortified town open all night (a), though surrounded

(a) I am sensible, that all our large fortifications are the idlest thing in the world, and that even if we had troops enough to defend them, this would not signify: for certainly no enemy will attempt to besiege us. But though we have no reason to be afraid of a siege, this should not hinder us from guarding with the utmost vigilance against
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surrounded by three powers, the most distant of whom is not above half a league from our glaciis.

This is not all: it is impossible that an establishment, so opposite to our ancient maxims, should be generally applauded. How many generous citizens with indignation would behold this monument of luxury and effeminacy, raised upon the ruins of our ancient simplicity, and threatening from afar our public liberty? Do you imagine, that after having loudly condemned this innovation, they would authorize it by their presence? Depend upon it, there are many that make no scruple to go to see a play at Paris, who would never set foot in a theatre at Geneva; because their country's welfare is more dear to them than their amusement. Where is the mother that would dare to carry her daughter to this dangerous school? and how many women would think it a dishonour to go thither themselves? If there are people at Paris, who do not frequent the playhouses, it is merely from a principle of religion, which surely ought to operate as strongly with us; and we should be further influenced by motives of morality, virtue, and patriotism, which

a surprize; for nothing is more easy than to assemble a body of troops in our neighbourhood. We have experienced, and to our cost, the use that may be made of those troops, and we should remember, that let the pretensions of an enemy be never so ill founded, when he is without side the town, they are proved to be excellent, as soon as he has got possession of it.

may restrain those who are under no check from religion (a).

That it is absolutely impossible for a theatre to maintain itself at Geneva by the occasional contribution of the audience, I think I have demonstrated. Therefore there is no other way to support it, but one of these two, either that the opulent should tax themselves, which would be a heavy burden, and what surely they would not be long in a humour to bear; or that the government would intermeddle in the affair, and support it at its own charges. But how shall this be done? Must the magistrates retrench their necessary expences, for which our moderate revenue is scarce sufficient, in order to raise a proper sum to answer this demand? Or must they apply to this important use, the monies which the œconomy and integrity of the administration have reserved for the emergencies of the state? Must we disband our little garrison, and guard our gates ourselves? Shall we reduce the moderate fees of our magistrates, and deprive ourselves of every resource against sudden and unforeseen accidents? In failure of these expedients, I see but one more practicable, which is by the way of tax or im-

(a) I do not mean by this, that we can be virtuous without religion; I was long of this specious opinion, but am now undeceived. But my meaning is, that a Christian may sometimes abstain, merely through motives of social virtue, from some particular actions, which are indifferent in themselves, and do not immediately relate to conscience, as that of going to a play, in a town where it is impolitic that plays should be suffered.

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sition, viz. to summon the common council in St. Peter's church, and there gravely to propose a tax for erecting a theatre. God forbid I should ever think any of our sage magistrates capable of making the like proposal; and from your own article, it is easy to judge in what manner it would be received.

Were we so unfortunate as to hit upon some expedient for removing these difficulties, it would still be so much the worse for us: for this could never be effected, but by means of some secret vice, which would undermine our little state, and sooner or later terminate in our ruin. Suppose, however, that our zeal for the stage should be productive of a miracle; suppose a company of comedians settled in Geneva, kept within bounds by our laws, and the theatre well managed and frequented; suppose last of all, our city in the flourishing condition you mention, and that it united the advantage of good morals to that of public entertainments: advantages, however, which appear to me incompatible; for the purpose of public entertainments being to supply the want of morals, of course they are of no use where morals exist.

The first sensible effect of this institution, would be a revolution in our customs, as I have already observed; and this would necessarily produce another in our manners. Whether a change of this nature would be to our advantage or not, is what we are now to examine.

In all well constituted states there are certain usages, intimately connected with the form of

government, and which help to support it. Such, for example, was the custom of clubs, so injudiciously ridiculed in the Spectator; and which have been succeeded by coffee-houses, and houses of ill fame. I question whether the English have been any gainers by the change. The like clubs have been lately introduced into Geneva, under the name of *circles*; and I have reason to judge from your article, that you were greatly struck with the good sense which reigns in those assemblies. This custom is very ancient with us, though its name be new. There were clubs when I was a boy, under the name of *societies*; but their form was not so good, nor so regular. The military exercise which calls us together in the spring, the different prizes at a particular season of the year, the feasts occasioned by those prizes, the passion for courting; all these things brought people often together, and gave them an opportunity to form parties of pleasure and friendly meetings: but as the object of those meetings was only recreation, they seldom were held any where but at the tavern. The necessity of our affairs obliging us to assemble oftener, and to deliberate coolly, our civil discords changed those tumultuous meetings into more decent and regular assemblies. They then took the name of *circles*, and from a very bad cause there arose very good effects (a).

These circles are societies of twelve or fifteen persons, who hire a convenient apartment, and

(a) I shall afterwards take notice of these inconveniences.

furnish it at their own expence. Hither as many of the members resort every afternoon, as are not detained elsewhere either by business or pleasure. Here they meet, and each person, unconstrained, pursues such amusements as his fancy directs him to; they play, they chat, they read, they drink, they smoke. Sometimes they sup there, but rarely; because the citizens of Geneva are very regular, and like to sup at home with their families: they oftentimes walk out together; and then their amusements consist in such exercises as are proper to strengthen the body, and preserve it in good health. The women, on the other hand, have their little societies at one another's houses. Here they amuse themselves with a game of cards, with a collation, and, as you may well imagine, with an eternal tattle. The men, though not severely excluded from these societies, seldom go thither; and I should have a worse opinion of a man that was perpetually, than of one that was never, among them.

Such are the daily amusements of the citizens of Geneva; amusements which neither exclude pleasure nor gaiety, and yet have something in them so simple and innocent, as greatly suits the manners of a republic. But when once a theatre comes to be erected, farewell circles, farewell societies! This is the revolution I foresaw; all these will be immediately at an end. And should you object, the example of London mentioned by myself, where the playhouses are no hindrance to clubs; I must observe, that there is a very wide difference in regard to us: a theatre in that im-

menſe city, is no more than a ſingle point; but at Geneva it is a huge object, that would abſorb every other entertainment.

Should you afterwards aſk me, where is the harm if thoſe circles were put down?—No, Sir, this queſtion can never come from a philoſopher. This is talking like a woman, or a fribble, who ſhall treat our circles as guard-houſes, and think they perceive the ſmell of tobacco. Yet I muſt give an answer: for this once, though I addreſs myſelf to you, I write to the public; and I believe this is pretty plain: but it was you that forced me to it.

First of all I ſay, that if it be a bad thing to ſmell of tobacco, it is a very good thing for people to be maſters of their property, and to lie ſafe in their beds. But I forgot that I am not writing to philoſophers like D'Alembert: I muſt therefore explain myſelf in another manner.

Let us follow the guidance of nature, and conſult the general good of ſociety; and there we ſhall find, that the two ſexes ought ſometimes to meet, but generally to live ſeparate. This I obſerved a while ago in regard to women; and now I ſay it with reſpect to men. The latter are as much, and rather more affected than the former, by too intimate a converſe with the other ſex; the women only hurt their morals, but we hurt both our morals and our conſtitution: for the weaker ſex, being unable to conform to our manner of living, which would be too laborious, they oblige us to take up with theirs, which to us is

too effeminate; and not caring any more to part with us, for want of abilities to become men, they degrade us into women.

This inconveniency, by which man is thus debased, is great every where; but especially in such a government as ours, it is of the highest importance to prevent it. Whether a monarch reigns over men or women, it is very indifferent to him, provided he is obeyed: but in a republic, men are wanted (*a*).

The ancients spent almost their whole lives in the open air, either attending to their private affairs, or regulating those of the state in a public forum, or walking in the country, in gardens, or on the sea shore, exposed to the rain, to the sun, and generally bare headed (*b*). On all those oc-

(*a*) I shall be told, that kings want men to carry on their wars. Not at all. Instead of thirty thousand men, for instance, they need only to raise a hundred thousand women. Women do not want courage: they prefer honour to life, and when they fight, they fight heartily. The inconveniency of their sex is, that they cannot bear the fatigues of war, or the inclemency of seasons. The way would be therefore to have thrice the number necessary for fighting, in order to sacrifice two thirds to sickness and mortality.

(*b*) After the battle gained by Cambyfes over Psammeticus, the Egyptians, who went always bare headed, were distinguished among the dead bodies by the thickness of their skulls: whereas the Persians, who used to wear large tiaras on their heads, had such soft skulls, that they were very easy to break. Herodotus himself was a long time after witness of this difference.

cations they had no women, but they knew very well where to find them, whenever they wanted their company; and we do not perceive, either by their writings, or by such scraps of conversation as have been transmitted down to us, that this reserve did the least prejudice either to their wit, to their good taste, or even to their amours. We indeed have learnt different manners: meanly devoted to the whimsies of a sex, whom we ought to protect, and not to worship, we have learnt to undervalue them by our foolish cringing, and to affront them by our fawning complaisance. The ladies at Paris have assemblies of men, who are more women than themselves, and who know how to pay every homage to beauty, except that which it deserves, the homage of the heart. But look at these men, see how uneasy they are in those voluntary prisons; see how they rise, how they sit down, how they run from the chimney to the window, and back again; how they take up and lay down a screen a hundred times; how they rummage books, run over pictures, turn and whirl about the room; while the idol lies motionless in a sofa, using no other action but that of her tongue and eyes. What is this difference owing to, but that nature prescribes this sedentary life to women, and quite an opposite one to man, in whom this restlessness indicates some real want? Though the oriental nations use but very little exercise, and do not walk about, the warmth of the climate making them transpire sufficiently, yet they sit down in the open air, and breathe freely;

freely; but here the women take particular care to stifle the men in close apartments.

If we compare the men of ancient times to those of the present age, in point of strength, we find no sort of equality. Our exercises at the academy are children's play, in regard to those of the ancient Gymnasia: the game of tennis has been laid aside as too fatiguing; and we have less of travelling on horseback. I say nothing of our troops. We cannot conceive those marches of the Greek and Roman armies: the distance of the way, the labour, the burden of the Roman soldier give us pain even in reading them, and frighten the imagination. The foot officers were not allowed to have horses. The generals frequently marched on foot with their troops. Never did the two Cato's travel otherwise, either by themselves, or with their armies. Even Otho himself, the effeminate Otho, marched on foot with a helmet on his head, when he led his army against Vitellius. Shew me one officer of them all, capable of doing as much at present. We are fallen in every thing. Our painters and sculptors complain they can no longer find models comparable to those of antiquity. Why so? has human nature degenerated? Is there a kind of physical decrepitude in the species, as in the individual? Far from it, the northern barbarians, who peopled Europe, as it were, with a new race, were much larger and stronger men than the Romans, whose empire they subdued: therefore we ought to be much stronger ourselves, who for the most part are descended from those invaders. But the ancient

cient Romans lived like men (a), and by constant exercise acquired a vigour of constitution, which nature had refused them; whereas we become enervated in that indolent life, to which we are reduced by our dependance on the sex. Though the barbarians I have been speaking of lived with women, yet they did not live like women; rather these had the courage to behave like those; as was the case also in regard to the Spartan dames. The women grew robust, and the men did not enervate themselves.

If thus running counter to nature be so hurtful to the body, it is much more so to the mind. I leave you to judge what kind of a man that must be, who is intirely taken up with the trifles of women, and who spends his whole life in doing for them what they ought to do for us, when exhausted by labour we would willingly amuse ourselves in their company. If we meanly resign ourselves to those puerile habits, how can we expect to rise to any thing great? Our talents, our writings, savour of our frivolous occupations (b): they are agreeable enough, if you will,

(a) The Romans were the smallest and slightest men in all Italy; and so great was this difference, says Livy, that their national troops, and those from other parts of Italy, were distinguished at the very first glance. Yet such advantage did exercise and discipline obtain over nature, that the weak did what the robust never could do; they conquered the whole country.

(b) Women in general love no art, have no disposition for any, neither have they any genius. They may succeed

will, but trifling and insipid like our sentiments, and their whole merit consists in that easy turn which is given to bagatelles. Those beings of a day, which are made only to please the fair sex, and have neither strength nor profundity, fly from the toilette to the counter. This is the way to write for ever the same performances, and to make them always new. You may mention, perhaps, two or three exceptions; and I will quote you a hundred thousand instances, which confirm the rule. For this reason, most of the productions of our times are but short-lived, and posterity will imagine, that very few books were written in an age which produced so many.

It would not be at all difficult to prove, that the women, instead of gaining by these customs, are obliged to give up many of their talents. They know in plain terms, that we have no obliging in small pieces, which require only a sprightly fancy, a delicate taste, or even a little philosophy and reasoning. They may acquire science, erudition, literature, and whatever is attained by dint of labour. But that heavenly fire, which warms and animates, that genius which consumes and devours, that thundering eloquence, those sublime transports, which pierce even to the soul, will be ever wanting in the works of female writers: their compositions are cold and pretty like themselves; they have as much fancy as you please, but never any life; they have a hundred times more sense than passion. They know not how to describe, or to feel even love itself. Sappho alone, as I know of, and another female author, deserve to be excepted. I would venture to lay a wager, that the Portuguese letters were written by a man. Now, wherever the women prevail, there their taste must prevail also; and this is what determines that of our age.

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are really losers. They are flattered, not beloved; they are courted, not honoured; they are surrounded with agreeable persons, but have no lovers; and what is worse, the former without having the same sentiments as the latter, usurp the same privileges. The too easy and too frequent intercourse between the two sexes, has produced this effect; and thus it is, that the general spirit of gallantry destroys at the same time both genius and love.

For my part, I find it difficult to conceive, how men come to pay so little respect to the fair, as to presume to trouble them with insipid phrases, and ironical compliments, that have not so much as the air of sincerity. To affront them by such evident untruths, is the same as letting them know in plain terms, that we have no obliging truth to tell them? Let love deceive itself, in regard to the qualities of the object beloved, this happens but too often; but has it any thing to do with this insipid jargon? Do not even they, who make use of it, address it indifferently to every woman; and would they not be confoundedly vexed, were they thought to be seriously in love with any? Let them not be uneasy about this. One must have very strange ideas of love, to believe them capable of it; for nothing is more unlike its voice than that of gallantry. From the notion I have of this fatal passion, of its inquietude, its uncertainties, its palpitations, its transports, its glowing expressions, its silence still more expressive, its looks inexpressible, which are emboldened by timidity, and represent the
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fond desires by fear; to me it seems, that after so impassioned a language, if a lover was once only to say, *I love you*, his mistress indignant would tell him, *You cease to love me*, and would never see him more during her whole life.

Our circles still preserve a faint image of the manners of antiquity. The men conversing with one another, are excused from levelling their ideas to the capacities of women, and disguising reason in a female garb; consequently they may enter into grave and serious discourse, without being afraid to expose themselves to ridicule. They may dare to speak of virtue and their country without passing for visionaries; and to assert their freedom, without being subservient to the whimsies of a foolish woman. Though the turn of conversation should not be so polite, the reasons perhaps have greater weight; for our citizens are not put off with humour and gentility. They do not solve a difficulty with a joke; they do not spare one another in disputes: each man finding himself attacked by the whole collected force of his adversary, is obliged to make use of all his power to defend himself; and thus it is that the mind acquires precision and vigour. If they fall sometimes into such discourse as may seem a little too free, you are not to be shocked at it: the least vulgar are not always the most virtuous: this language, though somewhat rude, is preferable to that studied style, in which the two sexes seduce each other, and grow decently acquainted with vice. The manner of life most agreeable to the inclinations of man, is also best adapted

adapted to his constitution. At Geneva the men do not like to sit all day in an easy chair: they follow such diversions as are attended with exercise; they run to and fro; they hold several circles in the country; and others are adjourned thither from the city. They have gardens to walk in, spacious courts for exercise, a large lake for swimming, and the whole country open for sporting. Neither are you to imagine, that this sport is to be had so conveniently, as in the neighbourhood of Paris, where they find game under their feet, and kill it on horseback. In a word, in these innocent and virtuous institutions is centered every thing that can any wise contribute to form the same men into friends, citizens, and soldiers, and of course whatever is best suited to a free people.

The meetings of women are charged with one objection, namely, detraction; for you may easily believe, that the anecdotes of a small town seldom escape those female committees: it is also thought, that absent husbands are not much spared there, and that every pretty woman, courted by our sex, has not fair play at her neighbour's circle. But perhaps there is more good than harm in this inconveniency; and it is certainly a less evil than those it prevents: for which is worse, that a woman in company with her female acquaintance should speak ill of her husband; or that *tete a tete* with another man, she should cuckold him; that she should find fault with, or that she should imitate the loose behaviour of her neighbour. Though the women at Geneva talk
very

very freely of what they know, and sometimes of what they only conjecture; yet they have a real horror against calumny; for they are never known to charge another with crimes, which they believe to be false: but in other countries the women render themselves guilty alike by their silence and by their conversation, concealing through fear of reprisals the vices they know, and maliciously divulging those of their own invention.

What a multitude of public scandals are prevented by these severe observers? In our city they perform in some measure the office of censors. Thus it was in the flourishing times of the Roman republic, when the citizens, watchful over each other's conduct, accused delinquents through zeal and love of justice: but as soon as Rome grew corrupted, and the only way to promote virtue was by concealing vice, the detecting of villains became a villainous profession. To zealous citizens succeeded base informers; and whereas heretofore the good accused the bad, the former were now open to accusation in their turn. I thank heaven, we are as yet very distant from so fatal a period. We are not reduced to the necessity of concealing ourselves from our own view, lest it should strike us with horror. For my part, I shall not have a better opinion of the women, when they behave with more circumspection: they will spare their own sex more, when they come to have more reason to be spared themselves, and when each shall want that indulgence

gence for herself, which she shows to her neighbours.

We need not be so much alarmed at the gossiping of female societies. Let them backbite as much as they please, provided they do it only among themselves. Women of corrupt morals would not be long able to bear with this manner of life; for let them be ever so fond of detraction, they would rather detract in men's company. Be that as it may; I never in my life beheld any of those circles, without a high sense of respect and esteem for the ladies that composed it. Such is, said I to myself, the design of nature: it gives different inclinations to the two sexes, to the end that they may live apart, each after their own manner (a). Thus do these lovely creatures pass away their days, pursuing the occupations suitable to their sex, or such simple and innocent amusements, as are apt to strike a generous heart, and to give a good opinion of their virtue. I know not what they have been saying; but this I know, that they have met together; it is possible they may have been talking about men, but they have amused themselves without men's company; and while they were so severe in criticizing the conduct of others, their own was irreproachable.

(a) This principle, the hinge of good morals, is explained after a clearer manner in a manuscript deposited in my hands, which I intend some day, if I have time, to publish; though this previous declaration is not likely to pre-engage the fair sex in favour of the work.

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The circles among our sex have also their inconveniencies, no doubt ; but what human institution is exempt ? They play, they get drunk, and sit up all night : this may be true ; and may be exaggerated. All things in life have a mixture of good and evil, but in different proportions. Every thing is abused : a trivial maxim, in consequence of which we are neither to reject, nor to admit every thing. The rule for chusing is extremely simple. When the good surpasseth the evil, the thing should be admitted notwithstanding its inconveniencies : when the evil surpasseth the good, it should be rejected even with its advantages. When the thing is good in itself, and bad only in its abuses ; and when these abuses can be prevented without much trouble, or tolerated without great prejudice, they may serve for a pretence, not for a reason, to abolish an useful custom : but whatever is bad in itself, will be always bad (*a*), do what you will to convert it to a good use. Such is the essential difference between the circles and playhouses.

The subjects of the same state, the inhabitants of the same town, are not anchorets ; they cannot live always retired ; and even if they could, they ought not to be forced to it. None but the most barbarous tyrants can be alarmed at a meeting of seven or eight people, from an apprehension, that their conversation should be confined to their miseries.

(*a*) I mean in the moral order : for in the physical order nothing is absolutely bad : whatever is, is right.

Now of all the inducements that are capable of bringing private people together in such a town as ours, the circles are, without doubt, the most rational, the most innocent, and the least dangerous : because they cannot, nor is it desired they should, be concealed ; they are publicly permitted, and remarkable for decency and order. It is even an easy matter to demonstrate, that the abuses to which they are liable, may equally arise from all others ; or that these may produce still greater abuses. Before we think of destroying an established custom, we should first consider what sort of usages are to be introduced in its place. Whoever can propose one that is practicable, and attended with no inconveniency, let him do it, and in God's name let the circles be abolished. In the mean time, let us suffer those to pass away the night in drinking, who would otherwise spend it in something worse.

All intemperance is criminal, and especially that which bereaves us of the noblest of our faculties. Excess of wine degrades a man, deprives him, at least for a time, of his reason, and stupifies him at long run. But, after all, the love of wine is no crime in itself, nor is it often the cause of committing any ; it besots a man, but does not make him wicked (*a*). For one
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(*a*) Let us not calumniate the vice itself : is it not deformed enough without having recourse to lies ? Wine causeth no wickedness, it only discloses it. He who killed Clitus in a drunken fit, put Philotas to death in cool blood. If drunkenness has its mad fits, what violent disorder is
without

short quarrel which it occasions, it gives birth to a hundred lasting friendships. Your bottle companions, generally speaking, are free and open-hearted; they are for the most part affectionate, upright, faithful, and in short, a very good sort of people, setting aside their predominant failing. Can you say as much of other vices? or would you pretend that the inhabitants of a city should be free from all blemish, and ever upon their guard? How many real vices are oftentimes concealed under the appearance of virtue! The virtuous man is sober through temperance; the knave through design. Where a people are addicted to immorality, to intrigues, to treason, to adultery, they dread a state of unreservedness, when the chearful companion unbosoms himself in the gladness of his heart. Wherever drunkenness is most abhorred, there it is most their interest to guard against it. In Switzerland it is almost esteemed; at Naples it is held in detestation: but in the main, who is most to be dreaded, the intemperant Swiss, or the reserved Italian?

I say it once more, it is preferable to be sober, and true, not only to one's self, but to society: for whatever is bad in morals, is bad also in politics. But the theologian animadverts on per-

without them? The difference is, that the others take root in the heart, this is kindled and extinguished in an instant; Except the heat of passion, which goes off, and is easily avoided, you may be sure, that whoever commits a wicked action in liquor, broods mischief when he is sober.

sonal evil, while the magistrate takes notice only of public consequences: the object of one is the perfection of man, which he never attains to; that of the other is the welfare of the state, so far as it is attainable: therefore every thing justly condemned from the pulpit, does not deserve to be punished by the laws. Never was there a nation destroyed by excess of wine; but all nations have been ruined by the inordinate use of women. The reason of this difference is obvious: the former of these two vices diverts people from the rest; the latter engenders them all. Difference of age must also be taken into the account. Wine is less tempting, and less depressing to youth; their warm blood inspires them with other desires; at the time of life, when the passions are strongest, a single spark will set them all on fire; reason begins to be offuscated at its first dawn; and man grows past all discipline, before he has been tamed, or learnt to wear the yoke of laws. But let the feeble and old, whose blood is half congealed, seek for a relief which cheers their heart; let them fly to the generous liquor which supplies the loss of decayed spirits (a). If they abuse this comfort of life, they have already discharged their duty to their country, and they only deprive it of the dregs of life: they are to blame, without doubt; for they cease to be citizens before their death. But

(a) Plato in his laws allows the use of wine to old men only, and even he allows them to indulge themselves in it sometimes to excess.

the former does not even begin to be a member of society : rather he shews himself to be a public enemy, by seducing his accomplices, by the example and influence of his corrupt morals, and especially by the dangerous maxims which he broaches on all occasions, in order to defend his debauchery. It would have been much better, had he never existed.

From the passion of gaming, there follows a more dangerous abuse, but which may be easily checked or prevented. It is a point that falls under the inspection of the police, and easier inquired into in circles than in private houses. Opinion is also capable of operating strongly in this affair : and whenever games of exercise and activity shall come into vogue ; cards, dice, and hazard will infallibly tumble to the ground. I do not even think, say what they will, that these easy and delusive ways of filling one's purse, can ever obtain greatly among a sensible industrious people, who too well know the value of time and money to throw them away.

Let us then keep up our circles, even with their defects : for these defects are not so much in the circles themselves, as in the people that compose them ; and there is no one form imaginable in human society, under which these same defects are not productive of more pernicious consequences. Again I repeat it, let us not search for chimerical perfections ; but for the best that can possibly be obtained, according to the nature of man, and the constitution of society. Some people there are, to whom I should say : put

down all circles and clubs, take away every barrier of decency between the sexes, endeavour, if possible, to be only corrupt: but you, my fellow citizens of Geneva, avoid this corruption, if it be yet time. Beware of the first step, which is never the last; and remember, that it is far easier to preserve good morals, than to fix a term to immorality.

Try the playhouse but two years, and you will find every thing turned topsy turvy. The people cannot divide themselves among so many amusements: the playhouse being usually opened at the same time as the circles, will dissolve these of course; for many of the members will adjourn thither; and the rest will be so indifferent about coming, as not to be of any great assistance to one another, or to keep up the associations for a considerable time. The meeting of the two sexes every day in the same place; the engagements and parties entered into for this very purpose; the ways of the world which will be described at the theatre, and which they will endeavour to imitate; the exhibiting of the ladies bedecked in their best apparel, and drawn up in the front boxes, as tradespeople before their shop for the receipt of custom; the concourse of young men who will also come to shew themselves, and find it much more agreeable to cut capers on the stage, than to go through their exercise on the parade; the little suppers of the women, who will make parties when the play is over, were it only with the actresses; finally, the contempt of ancient customs, which must naturally follow from the adopting

adopting of new; all this together will banish our ancient simplicity, to make way for the pleasurable life, and the genteel airs of the Parisians: and I doubt very much, whether, when the citizens of Geneva are once infected with those airs, they will long preserve a relish for our government.

I must not dissemble: our intentions are as yet good; but our manners visibly decline, and we are following the footsteps of those very people, whose fate we so much dread. For instance, I am told that the education of youth is generally a great deal better than heretofore at Geneva; which cannot be proved however any other way, than by shewing that it makes them better citizens. Certain it is, that children know how to make a more graceful bow; that they know how to give out their hand more genteely to the ladies, and to say a great many pretty things to them, for which, if it depended upon me, they should be soundly whipped; that they know how to be positive, to ask questions, to interrupt people in their discourse, and to teize every body they see, without either modesty or good breeding. I am told, that this is what forms them; I grant it forms them to be impertinent, and of all the improvements they learn, this is the only one they never forget. This is not all. In order to keep them near the women, as playthings designed for the diversion of the sex, care is taken to train them up in the most effeminate manner: they are kept out of the way of the sun, the wind, the rain, and the dust, that they may never be able to endure any inclemency

of weather. Since it is impossible to screen them intirely from all pressure of external air, they shall not feel it however, till their fibres have lost one half of their elasticity. They are deprived of exercise, stripped of their faculties, and rendered unfit for every other purpose, but that for which they are intended: in short, the only thing the women do not require of those mean slaves, is to devote themselves to their service after the manner of the Orientals. With this exception, all the distinction between them is, that nature having refused them the graces of the sex, they supply them with their follies. The last time I was at Geneva, I saw several of those young ladies in breeches, with fine white teeth, plump soft hands, a squeaking voice, and a pretty green umbrello, mimicking very awkwardly the character of men.

In my time they were not so delicate. Children brought up in a rustic manner, were not afraid of spoiling their complexions, nor of the inclemency of the air, to which they had been accustomed from their infancy. Their fathers carried them out to their country sports, to their exercises, and to all companies. Before aged people they behaved with a bashful timidity; but they were bold, daring, and quarrelsome among themselves; they had no curled locks to comb; they challenged each other to wrestle, to run, and at handy cuffs; they fought in good earnest, hurt one another sometimes, and then kissed and shook hands. They came home sweating, and out of breath,

breath, with their cloaths all torn, like slovenly boys; but these slovenly boys made men, who have a sincere affection for their country, and are ready to spill the last drop of their blood in its defence. God grant we may be able to say so much one day of our pretty smuggled up little gentlemen, and that these men at fifteen do not turn out children at thirty.

Luckily, they do not all deserve this character. Most of them have still retained that ancient roughness, which preserves their health as well as their morals. Even those whom too delicate an education has softened for some time, will be obliged, as they grow up in years, to comply with the customs of their country. The former will drop their asperity in conversing with the world; the latter will acquire strength by exercise; and they will both, I hope, become the men their ancestors were once, or at least the same men as their fathers. But let us not flatter ourselves that we shall be able to preserve our liberty, if we lay aside those manners by which it was first acquired.

To return to our comedians, and still supposing them to have succeeded in their scheme, which to me seems impossible; I find that this success must of course be prejudicial to our constitution, not only indirectly, by hurting our morals; but directly, by breaking that equilibrium, which ought to prevail in the different parts of the state, to the end that the intire body may be preserved in its proper temper.

Among

Among several reasons which I might alledge, it will be sufficient for me to single out one more within the reach of the generality of people; because it is confined to considerations of money and interest, considerations ever more striking in regard to the vulgar, than moral effects, from their incapacity of seeing the connections between these and their causes, or their influence on government.

Playhouses may be considered, where they happen to take, as a kind of tax, which, though voluntary, is not the less burdensome to the people; since it furnishes them with a continual temptation to expence, which they cannot withstand. This tax is a bad thing: not only as the sovereign receives no benefit from it; but especially as the repartition, far from being proportionable, loads the poor beyond their strength, and eases the rich, by supplying the place of more expensive amusements, which they would certainly have, were it not for the playhouses. To be convinced of this, we need only to reflect, that the different price of places is not in proportion to the fortunes of those who fill them. At the French comedy, the first boxes and the stage are commonly at four livres, and sometimes at six; the pit is twenty sous, and they have oftentimes attempted to raise it. You will not pretend to say, that the income of the wealthiest, who sit in the boxes, is no more than four times the income of those who go to the pit. The former, generally speaking, are immensely

mensely opulent, and most of the latter are worth nothing at all (a). It is the same case here, as in regard to duties on corn, wine, salt, and all the necessaries of life, which at first sight have an appearance of justice, though in the mean they are very iniquitous : for the poor man, who can spend no more than for bare necessaries, is obliged to throw away three fourths of his expence in taxes ; while these very necessaries, being the least part of the rich man's expence, he hardly feels the duty (b). Thus he who has but little, pays a great deal ; and he who has a great deal, pays but little : I own I do not see any great justice in this.

(a) Even if the difference of the price of places was to be settled in proportion to that of fortunes, still this would not restore an equilibrium. These inferior places, being rated too low, would be left to the mob, and in order to occupy a more honourable seat, every man would spend beyond his fortune. This observation may be made at the drolls and interludes in time of fairs. The reason of this inconveniency is, that the first places are then a fixed term, which cannot be removed further off ; and the others are always drawing near to it. The poor man constantly endeavours to get above his twenty sous ; but the rich man has no place to fly to beyond his four livres ; he must let the poor man approach, whether he will or no ; and if his pride suffers by it, his pocket is a gainer.

(b) This is the reason why such impostors as Rodin, and other public knaves, always lay their monopolies on the necessaries of life, to the end that the poor may be gently starved, and the rich not complain. Were the least object of luxury or pomp to be attacked, the nation is undone ; but provided the great people are satisfied, what does it signify whether the little ones live ?

Who

Who obliges, you will say, the poor man to go to the play? I answer, first of all, those who license the theatres, and throw the temptation in his way: secondly, his poverty itself, which, as it condemns him to constant labour, without any hopes of seeing an end to it, renders it more necessary for him to relax his mind, and to take a little diversion. He does not look upon himself as unfortunate in working, when all the world does the same: but is it not cruel that one who works hard, should have no amusements? He therefore takes his share of them; and this very entertainment, which is good œconomy in the rich, doubly hurts the poor, either by a real increase of expence, or by a dislike to work, as I have before explained.

From these further reflections it evidently follows, in my opinion, that the modern playhouses, where people are admitted only for money, have a tendency to favour and augment the inequality of fortunes, less sensibly, I own, in great capitals, than in such a small city as ours. Should I grant, that this inequality, carried to a certain point, may have its advantages; surely you must also allow, that it ought to have its bounds; especially in a petty state, and more especially in a republic. In monarchies, where the several orders are intermediate between the prince and the common people, it may be very indifferent whether particular persons step from one to the other; for as their place is soon supplied, this alteration does not break the chain. But in democracies, where the sub-

jects and the sovereign are only the same men under different relations, as soon as the lesser number grow richer than the greater, the state must either be ruined, or change its form. Whether the rich grow richer, or the poor become poorer, the difference of fortunes increaseth as much one way as the other; and this difference, carried beyond its due proportion, is what destroys the equilibrium abovementioned.

In monarchies, never can private wealth raise a man above the prince; but in a republic it may easily set him above the laws. Then the government has no longer any weight, and the rich man is the real sovereign. This being unquestionable, it remains to consider whether our inequality has not reached as high as it can, without shaking the foundations of the republic. Upon this article I refer to those, who are better acquainted than myself with our constitution, and with the proportion of our wealth. What I know is this, that as things receive from time only a natural bias to this inequality, and a successive progress towards its last term, it is highly imprudent to accelerate it, by institutions tending that way. The great Sully, who loved us, was so free as to tell us this truth: public entertainments and plays in all little republics, and especially at Geneva, weaken the government.

If the sole establishment of a theatre is so very prejudicial to us, what advantage should we derive from the plays that are acted there? Even the advantages, which they are capable of procuring

curing to those for whom they were originally written, will turn to our detriment, by giving us for our instruction what was given to the others as a censure, or by directing our tastes and inclinations to the things in the world, which suit us the least. In tragedy we shall behold heroes and tyrants. What have we to do with these? Are we designed for receiving or establishing tyranny? It will give us an empty admiration of power and grandeur. Of what use will this be to us? Shall we be the greater, or more powerful on that account? What will it signify to us to study the duties of kings on the stage, if we neglect to fulfill our own? Will the barren admiration of theatrical virtues indemnify us for the loss of simplicity and modesty, the characteristics of a good citizen? Comedy, instead of curing us of our ridicules, will infect us with those of others: it will persuade us, that we are in the wrong to despise vices, which are in such high esteem elsewhere. Let a marquiss be never so odd a character, still he is a marquiss. Imagine how this title sounds in a country so happy as to have none: and who knows how many tradesmen will think to follow the fashion, by imitating the marquisses of the last century? I shall not repeat what has been already mentioned of the constant ridicule of sincerity, of the continual triumph of vice, and the treating of heinous crimes with a vein of pleasantry and humour. What lessons to a people, who are still possessed of their natural rectitude, who believe that a villain is always despicable, and that an honest
man

man ought never to be a subject of ridicule. Shall Plato banish Homer from his republic; and shall we suffer Moliere in ours! What worse could happen to us, than to resemble the people whom he describes, or even those whom he makes us love?

Enough, I think, has been said already, in regard to them: nor do I think much better of Racine's heroes, those heroes, so finely dressed, so whining, so passionately loving, who, under an air of courage and virtue, exhibit only the patterns of the young people I have been speaking of, given to gallantry, to softness, and love, and in short to every thing that is capable of enervating a man, and rendering him negligent in regard to his real duties. The French stage breathes nothing but love: this is the great virtue to which all others are sacrificed, or which at least is exhibited in the most acceptable light to the spectators. I do not pretend to say, that they are in the wrong, with regard to the object proposed by the poet: I am sensible, that man without passions is a chimera; that the interest of the drama is founded intirely on them; that the heart is not engaged in passions which no way concern it, nor in those which it disapproves in others, though it may be subject to them itself. The love of human society, and of our country, represented on the stage, is most striking to those who are most susceptible of those affections; but when they are extinct, there remains only love, properly so called, to supply their place; because its attraction is most natural, and is more difficult to eradicate,
than

than all the rest. Yet it does not suit all men alike; it is to be admitted rather as a supplement to virtuous affections, than a virtuous affection itself; not but that it is commendable in its own nature, like every well regulated passion, but because its excess is dangerous, and almost inevitable.

The worst of men is he, who abstracts himself the most from the rest of his species, and who confines himself within his own breast: the best is he, who divides his affections equally among his equals. It is far better for a man to love a mistress, than to love himself only. But he who has a tender affection for his relations, his friends, his country and mankind, degrades himself by falling into an inordinate attachment, which quickly prejudices all other affections, and is surely preferred before them all. Upon this principle, I take upon me to affirm, that there are countries where the morals of the people are so corrupt, that it would be happy for them, could they reach so high as the passion of love; others, where it would be inconvenient to descend so low, and this, I dare say, is the case in regard to Geneva. I shall further add, that objects of too tender a nature are more dangerous for us to behold, than for any other people; because we have naturally an exquisite sensibility. The citizens of Geneva, though stiff and phlegmatic in their air and deportment, have a warm disposition of heart, more easy to be moved than to be kept within bounds. In this mansion of reason they are no strangers to beauty, nor to its empire; the levain of melancholy

lancholy oftentimes ferments their love; the men are but too apt to feel the jarring passions, the women to inspire them; and the fatal effects which these have sometimes produced, but too plainly shew the danger of exciting them by soft and moving representations. If the heroes of some plays make love give way to duty, the spectators admire their fortitude, but chime in with their weakness; at least they do not learn to imitate their resolution, but rather to expose themselves to occasions where it is greatly wanted. It is true, on such occasions there is more exercise for virtue; but he who runs into danger, deserves to fall. Love, even love itself, puts on a mask to surprize us; it disguises itself with the enthusiasm, it usurps the force, it affects the language, of virtue; and the error is not perceived, till it is grown too late! How many worthy men, who at first were tender and generous lovers, have been seduced by these fallacious appearances, and gradually become vile corruptors, void of morals or respect for conjugal fidelity, void of all regard to the sacred ties of confidence and friendship! Is it when we are upon full speed, that we expect to stop our course? Is it by whining all our days, we are to learn to subdue the passion of love? A slight inclination may be easily overcome; but he who has felt the attacks of real love, and bravely surmounted them; O, let us forgive this mortal, if such mortal exists, for daring to pretend to virtue!

M

Thus,

Thus, which way soever we consider things, the same truth makes still an impression on us. The whole merit of theatrical performances, and what renders them useful to those for whom they were originally composed, will be prejudicial to us; not excepting the very taste which we may fancy ourselves to have learned from thence, and which will be a false taste, without delicacy or discernment, injudiciously substituted in the room of solid reason. Taste depends on several things: the imitative inquiries which we see at the theatre, the comparisons we have occasion to make there, the reflections on the art of pleasing the spectators, may be capable of making it blossom, but will never bring it to maturity. This requires we should live in great cities; it requires luxury and the polite arts; it requires a free and intimate communication among fellow-citizens; it requires gallantry, and even debauchery; in short, it requires vices which we are forced to embellish, in order to look for an agreeable side in every thing, and to find it. Some of these things we shall ever want, and we ought to tremble at the thoughts of acquiring the rest.

We shall have comedians, but what sort? Will a good company come directly to settle in a town, that has only twenty four thousand inhabitants? Therefore we shall have bad players, and we shall be but bad judges in the beginning. Shall we improve them, or will they improve us? We shall have good plays; but receiving them

them for such upon other people's word, we need not examine into their merit; so that we shall be no greater gainers by seeing them acted, than by reading them. Yet we shall set up for connoisseurs, for theatrical critics; we shall chuse to decide for our money, which will only render us the more ridiculous. It is not ridiculous to want taste, when we despise it: but it is highly so to pique ourselves upon having a taste, when it is but a bad one. And after all, what is this taste so much talked of? The art of judging of trifles. In truth, when we have so great an object to preserve as our liberty, every thing else is puerile.

Against so many inconveniencies, I find but one remedy; which is, in order to suit our drama to our stage, we should be composers ourselves, and begin with having authors before we sent for comedians. For it is not fit they should shew us all sorts of imitations, but only those of decent subjects, and suitable to freemen (a). Cer-

(a) Si quis ergo in nostram urbem venerit, qui animi sapientiâ in omnes possit sese vertere formas, et omnia imitari, volueritque poemata sua ostentare, venerabimur quidem ipsum, ut sacrum, admirabilem, et jucundum: dicemus autem non esse ejusmodi hominem in republicâ nostrâ, neque fas esse ut insit, mittemusque in aliam urbem; unguento caput ejus perungentes, lanâque coronantes. Nos autem austeriori minusque jucundo utemur poetâ, fabularumque sâctore, utilitatis gratiâ, qui decori nobis rationem exprimat, et quæ dici debent dicat in his formulis quas à principio pro legibus tulimus, quando cives erudire aggressi sumus. *Plat. de Rep. lib. 3.*

tain it is, that plays written like the Greek drama, that is, whose stories were built on the past misfortunes of our country, or the present vices of the people, might afford very useful instructions to the audience. But then, who are to be the heroes of our tragedies? Our Bertheliers? Our Levrerys? Worthy citizens without doubt, but lost in their obscurity, and whose vulgar names degrade their generous souls (a)! Neither are we ourselves great enough to admire them. Who shall be our tyrants? Gentlemen of the spoon (b), bishops of Geneva, the ancestors of a family with whom we have lately concluded a

(a) Philibert Berthelier was the Cato of Geneva, with this difference, that public liberty began with the one, and expired with the other. He had a tame weasel when he was put under arrest; he delivered up his sword with that air of unconcern, which fits so well on virtue in disgrace; then he continued to play with the weasel, without answering a word to the abusive language of his guards. He died in a manner becoming a martyr of liberty.

John Levrery was Berthelier's Favonius, not by a childish imitation of his speech and manners, but by a calm resignation to fate; knowing that the example of his death would be more useful to his country than his life. Before he mounted the scaffold, he wrote on the prison wall the following epitaph, which had been made for his predecessor:

*Quid mihi mors nocuit? virtus post fata virescit :
Nec cruce, nec sævi gladio perit illa tyranni.*

(b) This was a confraternity of gentlemen of Savoy, who had made a vow to rob and plunder the city of Geneva, and who, in token of their association, carried a spoon hung about their necks.

treaty, and whom we are bound to respect. Fifty years ago I would not take upon me to answer, but that the devil (a) and antichrist would have been made to act their part. Among the Greeks, a people in other respects of no small levity, their country was always a grave and serious subject; but in this merry age, when every thing is turned into ridicule, except power, people dare to talk of heroism only in great monarchies, when it is to be found only in little republics.

With regard to comedy, we must not think of it. With us it would produce an infinite deal of mischief; it would serve as an instrument to factions, to parties, and to private revenge. Our

(a) When I was young, I read a tragedy of the Escalade, where the devil was indeed one of the *dramatis personæ*. I was told, that this play having been once acted, this person upon entering the stage appeared double, as if the original had been jealous, that any one should dare to mimic him, and that the whole audience were instantly seized with terror, which put an end to the representation. This is a ridiculous story, and will appear more so at Paris than at Geneva; nevertheless, supposing the story to be true, we shall find in this double appearance, a theatrical and really striking effect. I can fancy but one object more simple, and yet more terrible, that of the hand appearing on the wall, and writing the unknown characters at the feast of Belsazzar. This very idea alone is enough to make one's hair stand of an end. It seems to me, that our dramatic poets fall greatly short of these sublime inventions: they make a noise to frighten us behind the scenes, without any effect. Even on the stage every thing ought not to be exposed to view, but the imagination should only be excited.

city is so small, that the painting even of the most general manners would soon degenerate into personal satire. The example of Athens, a city incomparably more populous than Geneva, affords us a most useful instruction : it was the stage that paved the way for the exile of several great men, and for the death of Socrates ; it was the stage that ruined Athens ; and the calamities of this city did but too well justify the concern, which Solon expressed at the first presentments of Theſpis. This at least is sure in regard to us, that it will be a very inauspicious omen to our republic, whenever our citizens come to set up for wits, or spend their time in writing French verses, and dramatic pieces, a task for which we have no abilities. But let Mr. Voltaire favour us with tragedies on the same plan as the death of Cæsar, or the first act of Brutus ; and if we must have a theatre, let him engage to fill it always with his genius, and to live as long as his performances.

I should be of opinion, that all these reflections ought to be well weighed, before we took into the account the passion for dress and extravagance, with which the example of the comedians must needs infect our youth : but this example will also have its effect ; and if, generally speaking, the laws are every where insufficient to stem the torrent of vices, which arise from the nature of the thing, as I think I have fairly shewn, how much more so will they be with us, when the first mark of their weakness is to be the establishing a company of comedians ? For it is not properly the

the comedians that are to introduce this passion for extravagance ; on the contrary, this very passion shall pave the way for their reception, and introduce those comedians : and they, on the other hand, shall only contribute to strengthen an inclination already formed, which having been the cause of their first admittance, will for a much stronger reason occasion their being continued with all their faults.

I proceed all along upon the supposition, that they shall be able to get an easy livelihood in so small a city ; and I observe further, that if we ever come to respect them, as you pretend, in a country where almost every body is upon an equality, the consequence will be, that they must partake of this equality ; and moreover, they shall be possessed of the public favour, which they must naturally acquire. Besides, they will not be overawed, as in other places, by grandees, whose protection they naturally court, and whom they are afraid to disoblige. The magistrates, you say, will be a check to them. Be it so. But these magistrates have been once in a private capacity ; they may have been familiarly acquainted with those players ; they may have children also under the same connection, and wives that are fond of pleasure. These ties are so many doors to indulgence and protection, which it will be impossible to keep always shut. The comedians, thus sure of impunity, must obtain the same privilege for their imitators ; it is with these the confusion will begin, but it is impossible to tell where it will stop. The women, the young

people, the rich, the indolent, will side with them, to elude the laws by which they are restrained, and to encourage their licentiousness: each endeavouring to content them, will think he is promoting his own pleasures. Who shall dare to stem this torrent, unless perhaps some old rigid clergyman, whose admonition will be disregarded, and whose sense and gravity will be looked upon as pedantry by rash and inconsiderate youth? In short, provided they play their cards well, and conduct themselves with proper art and policy in proportion to their success, I make no doubt but in thirty years time they will be masters of the state (a). The candidates for public offices will curry favour with them, in order to obtain their suffrages: elections will be made in the boxes of the actresses; and the heads of a free people will be the creatures of a company of stage players. My pen is ready to drop out of my hand, at this very idea. Let it be supposed as distant as you will, or let me be accused of having carried my surmises too far; I have not a word more to say. Let what will happen, either these gentry must reform their manners among us, or they will corrupt ours. As soon as we shall cease to be terrified at this alternative, the comedians

(a) It is always to be remembered, that to support a playhouse at Geneva, the passion for these entertainments must be extravagant; if it be moderate, the playhouse will drop. Reason therefore requires, that examining the effects of the stage, they should be proportioned to a cause able to support it.

may

may come; they will no longer be able to do us any harm.

These, Sir, are the considerations which I had to propose to the public, and to you, concerning a question you was pleased to discuss, in an article with which, in my humble opinion, it had nothing at all to do. Were my reasons less solid than they appear to me, and consequently had they not a sufficient weight to counterballance yours; you will allow me, however, that in so small a state as the republic of Geneva, all innovations are dangerous, and that never should any be made without grave and cogent motives. Shew me then the urgent necessity for this. Where are the disorders that should oblige us to have recourse to so dangerous an expedient? Without this, are we undone? Is our city so large, have vice and idleness taken so deep a root amongst us, that it is impossible for our state to subsist any longer without theatrical performances? You will say, that it tolerates worse entertainments, such as are equally shocking to good taste and morality: but there is an immense difference betwixt the exhibiting of vice, and making an attack upon virtue: for the latter depends not so much on the nature of the entertainment, as on the impression it causeth. In this sense, what affinity or connection is there between a few temporary drolls, and a standing theatre; between the buffoonery of a mountebank, and the regular presentments of dramatic performances; between booths erected at fairs to divert the populace, and a decent theatre where genteel

genteel people expect to meet with instruction? Of these amusements, one is of no consequence, being forgot the very next day; but the other is an important object, which merits the whole attention of the government. In all countries it is permitted to amuse children, and every one that pleases may be a child, without many inconveniencies. If those fulsome diversions have no sort of taste, so much the better; the people will be sooner tired of them: if they are indelicate, they are less attracting. Vice seldom insinuates itself by transgressing against modesty, but by disguising itself in a decent dress; and as for obscenity, it is more contrary to politeness than to morality. For this reason, the most corrupt nations are always most refined in their expressions, and their ear is most scrupulous. Did you ever perceive, that the entertainments exhibited at fairs and in market places, had any great effect upon the imaginations of the youth, who went to see them? This is expected only from the polite conversation of the stage: and it would be much better for a girl to see an hundred Barthemy drolls, than one single representation of the Oracle.

However, I own, that with regard to myself, I should be glad we could do intirely without those drolls, and that we learnt all of us, great and small, to derive our pleasures and duties from our station of life, and our own breasts: but because we ought to banish puppet-players and mountebanks, it does not follow that we should invite comedians. You have seen even in your own country, how the city of Marseilles made a
long

long stand against the like innovation, so far as to oppose the repeated orders of the minister, plainly shewing, that she still preserved the memory, and breathed the spirit of her ancient liberty. How striking this example to a city, which has still retained her freedom!

But, above all, do not take it into your head to establish an entertainment of this kind by way of essay, with a salvo to suppress it, whenever it is attended with inconveniencies: for these inconveniencies are not so soon removed as the theatre that gave them birth; they remain when the cause is no more; and when once they begin to be felt, they are past all remedy. Our manners and tastes are not reformed so easily as they are corrupted; our pleasures, even our innocent pleasures, will lose their charms; the playhouse will give us a dislike to them for ever. As idleness must follow of course, those vacant hours, which we shall not know how to fill up, will render us a burden to ourselves; the comedians, at their departure, will leave us in a restless state, which shall be a pledge of their return, and must quickly oblige us to recall them, or to do worse. We shall be to blame in erecting a theatre; we shall be to blame in suffering it to continue; and we shall be still more to blame in discontinuing it: after the first mistake, we shall have nothing left but a series of errors.

Must there be then, say you, no shows nor sports in a republic? Yes, there must, and a great many. It is republics that first instituted them, and it is in republics that they are exhibited with

with a genuine air of festivity. Who are the people, whom it most becomes to have frequent meetings, and to enter into agreeable parties of pleasure and mirth, but they who have so many reasons to love each other, and to continue for ever united? We have many of these public festivals already; and were we to have more, I should still be pleased. But let us not adopt those exclusive entertainments, which hold only a small number of people, locked up, as it were, in a gloomy cavern, where they sit timid and motionless in pensive silence; where the eye is offended with such disagreeable objects, as partition walls, iron spikes, soldiers, and striking images of servitude and inequality. No, happy people, these are not your festivals! You are to assemble in the open air, under the canopy of heaven, and there you are to feast on the contemplation of your happiness. Let your pleasures be neither mercenary nor effeminate; let no constraint nor interest adulterate them; let them be free and generous like yourselves; let the sun dart its rays on your innocent spectacles, and then you will form one yourselves, the finest that eyes can behold.

But you want to know the nature of these festivals, and what is to be shewn there: nothing, if you will. Wherever liberty and affluence reign, there is the seat of true happiness. You may plant a maypole in the middle of a square, and crown it with flowers; let the people then be assembled round, and this shall be called a festival. You may do better still: let
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the spectators be exhibited as a show; let them be actors themselves; let each man see and love himself in others, to the end that they may be all the more intimately united. I have no occasion to refer to the games of the ancient Greeks; there are others of modern date, which still exist, and are in use with us. Every year we have reviews, and public prizes, such as the crowning of those who are excellent in shooting at a mark, or in artillery and navigation. Institutions so useful (*a*), and so agreeable, cannot be too numerous; there cannot

(*a*) It is not enough that the people have bread, and live according to their station; they must also live agreeably; to the end that they may be more able to discharge their respective duties, and less eager to alter their condition; as also that the public order may be the better established. Good morals depend more than we imagine, on every man's being pleased with his condition of life. Briguing and intrigues are owing to restlessness and discontent: every thing goes amiss, when one person covets another's employment. To do well in life, a man must love his profession. The state is never rightly fixed, till each individual being seated in his place, their whole force is united, and concurs to the general good, instead of being employed to their mutual prejudice, as it must happen in every ill constituted government. This being premised, what are we to think of those who would deprive the people of festivals, pleasures, and every kind of amusement, as tending to divert them from their work? This maxim is barbarous, is false. So much the worse, if the people have no time left but to earn their bread: they must be allowed some to eat it in comfort; otherwise they will not earn it long. That just and beneficent Deity, who is willing they should work, is willing also they should divert themselves:

cannot be too many coronations of this sort. Why should not we do as much to render ourselves hearty and robust, as to learn the military exercise? Hath the republic less need of artists than soldiers? Why should not we, on the plan of the military rewards, found other gymnastic prizes, for wrestling, for races, for the disk, and for various bodily exercises? Why should not we excite our watermen by rowing for wagers on the lake? Can there be in the universe a more splendid sight, than to behold a hundred boats, elegantly rigged, on that spacious magnificent basin, putting off at a signal given, in order to seize a flag hoisted as a mark, and attending on the victor to receive the merited prize? All these solemnities need no further expence than people have a mind, and the concourse alone renders them sufficiently magnificent. One must have been an eyewitness, to be able to judge with what avidity the citizens of Geneva pursue these amusements. You would not take them to be the same people; they are no longer that methodical set of men, themselves: nature equally subjects them to exercise and repose, to pleasure and pain. The dislike to work hurts the poor wretches more than work itself. Therefore if you would have people active and industrious, give them festivals, give them amusements, which shall render them fond of their condition of life, and hinder their envying those of an easier situation. A few days lost in this manner, will enhance the value of the rest. Preside over their pleasures, in order to render them decent; this is the right method to encourage them to work.

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who never deviate from their family rules; they are no longer the just reasoners, that weigh every thing, even pleasantry itself, in the scales of reason. They are lively, gay, and fond; their heart is then in their eyes, as it is always on their lips; they endeavour to communicate their joy, their pleasures; they invite, they press, they force, they dispute with their guests. The several societies form but one, and every thing is common to all. It is almost indifferent at what table you sit down: they would be the very picture of those of Sparta, was there less profusion; but even this profusion is well placed, and the prospect of plenty heightens that of liberty, to which it owes its birth.

The winter, a season sacred to the private conferences of friends, is less adapted to public festivals. Yet there is a sort, which I should be glad they were less scrupulous about, namely, balls for young people of both sexes that intend to marry. I never could understand why there should be so violent a prejudice against dancing and the assemblies occasioned thereby: just as if there was more harm to dance than to sing; as if both these amusements were not equally agreeable to the dictates of nature; and as if it were a crime for those who are designed to be united, to divert themselves innocently in public. Man and woman were formed for each other. It is the divine will they should answer the end they were designed for; and surely the first and holiest of social ties, is that of marriage. All false religions are unnatural; none but ours, which follows and

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regulates nature, proclaims an institution truly divine, and suitable to man. Religion ought not to clog matrimony with difficulties, superadded to the impediments of the civil magistrate; with difficulties which the Gospel no where prescribes, and which every good government condemns. But where can young people have an opportunity to take a liking to each other, and to appear with more decency and circumspection, than at an assembly, where the public eye obliges them to behave with modesty and reserve? How can the Deity be offended with an agreeable wholesome exercise, adapted to the vivacity of young people, where they learn to present themselves with decency and a good grace, and where the company is so great a check upon their behaviour, that they dare not be off their guard a single instant? Is it possible to imagine a fairer way not to deceive each other, at least as to their persons; and to shew themselves in their real colours, to those who have an interest in knowing them perfectly well, before they engage to love them? Does not the duty of cherishing each other imply that of pleasing themselves? and is it not an object worthy of two virtuous, two christian hearts, which are endeavouring to unite, to prepare themselves for that mutual love which the Deity enjoins them?

What is the consequence in those places, where they are subject to perpetual constraint, where the most innocent gaiety is punished as a crime, where young people of both sexes never dare to meet in public, and where the indiscreet severity of a
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parish priest will never permit him to preach any thing in God's name, but servile constraint, and tiresome melancholy? They elude a shocking tyranny, which both nature and reason disavow. Youth deprived of lawful pleasures, being giddy and gay, will substitute others more dangerous in their stead. The *tete a tete* meetings, contrived with such art, serve instead of public assemblies. By concealing themselves, as if they were guilty of a crime, they are tempted to be criminals. Innocent mirth loves to enjoy itself in the open day; but vice is a friend to darkness, and never did innocence and mystery live long together.

For my part, far from censuring such simple amusements, I should be glad they had the sanction of public authority, and to prevent particular disorders, that they were converted into solemn and periodical balls, opened indistinctly for the youth of both sexes. I should be glad that a magistrate (a), appointed by the council, would not think it beneath him to preside over these assemblies. I should be glad that the parents

(a) Over each corporation or public society, of which our state is composed, presides one of these magistrates, by the name of *Lord Commissioner*. They assist at all assemblies, and even at festivals. Their presence does not hinder a decent familiarity among the members of the society, but it maintains that respect which every body ought to pay to the laws, to manners, and to decency, even in the midst of jollity and mirth. This is an excellent institution, and constitutes one of the great connections between the people and their governors.

assisted also, in order to have an eye over their children, to be witnesses of their graceful deportment, as well as of the applauses they merit, and consequently to enjoy the sweetest sight that can possibly affect a tender parent. I should be glad, that every married person was admitted to this assembly in the quality of spectator and judge, but that none should be suffered to profane the conjugal dignity by dancing: for to what honest purpose could they thus expose themselves in public? I should be glad, that in the hall there was a convenient and honourable spot railed in, for aged persons of both sexes, who, after furnishing their country with citizens, might see their little children preparing to enter the same career. I should be glad, that no one went either in or out without saluting this place of honour, and that every young couple, before and after dancing, should do reverence to the judges, to the end that they may accustom themselves betimes to respect old age. I make no doubt, but that this agreeable reunion of the two extremes of human life, would afford a most moving spectacle to that assembly; and that tears of joy would sometimes be seen to flow from those venerable persons, capable of melting the sensible spectator. I should be glad, that every year at the last ball, the young lady, who had behaved with the greatest decency and best deportment at the precedent dances, and had given the highest satisfaction to all the world in the opinion of the venerable judges, should be honoured with a crown by
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the hands of the *lord commissioner* (a), and with the title of queen of the ball, which she should enjoy the whole year. I should be glad, that at the closing of this assembly, she was conducted home in ceremony, and that her parents were complimented and thanked for the excellent education given to their daughter. Lastly, I should be glad, that if she was to be married in the course of a year, the magistrates would make her a present, and grant her some mark of public distinction, to the end that this honour might be an object of so serious a nature, as never to become the subject of ridicule.

True it is, there would be reason to apprehend a little partiality, if the age of the judges did not leave the whole preference to merit: but even if modest beauty was sometimes favoured, where would be the great harm? Having more occasion to defend itself, does it not stand in need of more encouragement? Is it not a gift of nature, as well as wit and abilities? Where is the inconveniency in obtaining a few honours, which shall be an excitement to deserve them, and may content self-love, without offending virtue?

By improving this plan, under a notion of courtship and amusement, these festivals might have many useful ends, which would render them of such importance, as to be a proper object of the police. Young people having sure and decent meetings

(a) See the precedent note.

would be less tempted to seek for others more dangerous. In the mean time, each sex would more patiently pursue those occupations and pleasures which belong to their state, and would more easily be consoled for the loss of one another's company. Private people of all conditions would have the pleasure of an agreeable sight, especially to parents. Mothers would find amusement in dressing out their daughters, which would also be a diversion to a great many more; and this dress, being innocent and commendable in its intentions, would be extremely well judged. The occasions of meeting, in order to unite more closely, and to settle their little feasts and entertainments, would frequently be the means of reconciling families, and of establishing peace, a thing so necessary in our republic. The inclinations of children, without altering the authority of fathers, would be a little more at liberty; the first choice would depend a little more on the heart; the circumstances of age, humour, taste, and character, would be a little more consulted; and less weight would be given to condition and fortune, which produce most unhappy matches, when they happen to be preferred to every other consideration. As the ways of getting acquainted became more easy, marriages would be more frequent; and these being less circumscribed, would prevent the division of parties, would temper all excessive inequality, would be better able to maintain the spirit of the constitution among the body of the people: balls, under this regulation, would not resemble a public

lic assembly, but rather a large family; and from the bosom of joy and pleasure, the safety, peace, and prosperity of the republic would perpetually flow (a).

Upon

(a) I have a pleasure in fancying to myself the judgments which several will pass on my taste from my writings. Upon reading the present tract, they will be sure to say: this man is mad after dancing; but I am tired at a ball; he cannot bear plays; I am passionately fond of them; he has an aversion to the fair sex; here I shall have every body on my side: he has taken a prejudice against comedians; I have all the reason in the world to like them, and the friendship of one only, with whom I was particularly acquainted, must do honour to any man. The same judgment they will pass in regard to the poets, whose plays I have been obliged to censure: the deceased are not according to my taste, and I have a pique against the living. The truth is, Racine charms me, and I never missed, if I could help it, to see any of Moliere's comedies. If I have said less of Corneille, it is because, not having seen many of his plays, and having no books by me, my memory does not enable me to quote him. In regard to the author of Atreus, and of Catiline, I never saw him but once, and then it was to receive a favour, I esteem his genius, and respect his old age; but whatever honour I pay to his person, I owe nothing more than justice to his writings; and I cannot discharge my debts at the expence of the public good, and of truth. If I may appear somewhat too free in my writings, it is intirely owing to the purity of my intention, and to a disinterestedness which I have seen but in few authors, and which very few will chuse to imitate. Never was I warped by private views, to depart from the intention of serving the public, which first induced me to take pen in hand; and I may say, that I have generally writ against

Upon these principles, it would be an easy matter, with very little expence, and without danger to the public, to establish more entertainments than we really want, to render our city a more agreeable abode, even to strangers, who, finding nothing like it any where else, would resort hither at least for the singularity of the sight. Though, sincerely speaking, I have very good reasons to look upon this concourse of strangers rather as an inconveniency than advantage; and in regard to myself I am persuaded, that never foreigner set foot in Geneva, who did not do a great deal more harm than good to this city.

my own interest. *Vitam impendere vero.* This is the device I chose, and which I think I deserve. Reader, I may deceive myself, but not you, if I know it: you may distrust my abilities, but not my sincerity. The love of the public good, is the only passion that makes me address myself to the public: I am sensible, that then I forget myself; and if any man offends me, I am silent in regard to him, lest my resentment should render me unjust. This doctrine is of use to my enemies, forasmuch as they may injure me at their ease, and without being afraid of reprisals; it is of use also to my readers, who need not be afraid that my passion shall impose upon them; and above all to myself, who living in peace even with those who abuse me, can feel only the evil done to me, and not that of returning it. Pure and sacred truth, to whose altars I have consecrated all my days, my passion shall never stain the sincere love I have for thee; neither interest nor fear shall ever alter the homage I delight in offering up to thy shrine, and my pen shall never refuse thee any thing, save what she would be afraid to grant to my revenge.

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But do you know, Sir, who are the people we should endeavour to draw and to keep within our walls? They are the very natives of Geneva themselves, who, notwithstanding their sincere affection for their country, have so strong a passion for travelling, that you find them dispersed over all the world. One moiety of our citizens are scattered in different parts, and live and die far away from their native soil; I might mention myself among the rest, were I of more consequence. I am sensible, that we are under a necessity of travelling into distant countries in search of a livelihood; and that it would be difficult for us to subsist, if we were always confined to this spot: but let not this exile be eternal. Let those, whose industry heaven has blest, come, like the bee, with the fruit they have gathered, into the hive; let them exhilarate their fellow-citizens with their good fortune; let them excite the emulation of young people; let them diffuse their wealth among their countrymen; let them, in short, modestly enjoy at home, the riches they have honestly acquired abroad. But what could induce them to return? Is it our theatre? This would fall greatly short of the perfection of other playhouses. Would they therefore quit the theatrical entertainments of Paris and London, for the sake of seeing once more those of Geneva? By no means, Sir, this would not be the way to make them return. To produce this effect, every man should be sensible of the impossibility of finding abroad what he has left behind him in his own country: there

should be likewise an invincible charm to call him back to the abode which he ought never to have quitted: the idea of his first exercises, entertainments, and pleasures, ought to be gravely imprinted in his heart: the agreeable impressions, which he received in his youth, should continue and grow stronger when he advances in years, and when a thousand other ideas are effaced: even amidst the gloomy magnificence of great states, he should continually hear a secret voice in the inmost recesses of his heart, saying: Alas! where are the sports and entertainments of my youth? Where is the harmony of my fellow-citizens? Where is the public brotherhood? Where is the pure joy, and real gladness? Where are peace, liberty, justice, innocence? Let us go in search of all these blessings. Good God! with the heart of a Genevois, with so pleasant a city, so charming a landscape, so equitable a government, such real and pure pleasures, and every thing necessary to relish them, how can we forbear adoring our country?

Thus did Sparta, whom I can never cite too often for a pattern of our conduct; thus did Sparta recall her citizens to their native country by modest festivals, and rustic games: hence at Athens, amidst the polite arts; hence at Susa, the centre of luxury and indolence, did the brave Spartan sigh after his coarse entertainments, and toilsome exercises. It was at Sparta, that in the midst of constant labour, every thing was pleasure and entertainment; there it was that the hardest toils passed for recreation, and that the least

least amusements were fraught with public instruction; there it was that the citizens, in continual assemblies, devoted their whole lives to diversions, which took up the attention of the state, and to sports, which they never intermitted but in time of war.

— Methinks I hear some wtlings ask me, whether among such a number of surprizing instructions, I am not also desirous to introduce the dances of the Spartan dames? I answer, that I should be pleased, if both our eyes and our hearts were chaste enough to bear such a sight, and if young women were protected at Geneva, as at Sparta, by the public modesty: but notwithstanding the high esteem I have for my countrymen, full well I know how great a difference there is between them and the Lacedemonians; and I propose no other institutions of the latter, than are adapted to the capacity of the former. If the sage Plutarch has undertaken to justify the abovementioned custom, why should I meddle with it after him? It must be acknowledged, however, that this custom suited only the disciples of Lycurgus; that their frugal and toilsome life, their pure and austere manners, and their peculiar strength of mind, alone could render innocent in their eyes, a spectacle so shocking to every nation that had only a regard to modesty.

But do you think, that in the main the artful attire of our women is not as dangerous as absolute nakedness, the first effects of which would by habit be soon turned into indifference, and
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perhaps into disrelish? Is it not known, that statues and pictures never give offence, except when part of the body is dressed; and that this renders the nudities obscene? The immediate power of the senses is weak and limited; it is by the aid of the imagination that they do the greatest mischief: this it is that inflames the desires, by representing things more charming than they are really in themselves; this it is that causeth the eye to be shocked at naked objects, knowing they ought to be clothed. There is no garment ever so modest, but the eye, when raised by the imagination, will pierce through it. A young Chinese lady, only by putting out her toe, though with her shoe on, would ravage more hearts at Pequín, than the finest girl in the world dancing naked on the banks of Taygetus. But, when women dress themselves with such seeming carelessness and real art, as the custom is at present; when they shew but little only to make us desire more; when the obstacle set before the eye is intended to irritate the imagination; when they veil only a part of the object, the better to set off the part exposed, I to myself only

Hæu! male tum mites defendit pampinus uvæ.

Let us put an end to these numerous digressions. Thank heaven! this is the last: I am at the conclusion. I gave the feasts of the Lacedæmonians as a model of those, which I should be glad to see established among fellow-citizens. It was not only their object, but likewise their simplicity that recommended them: there was no
pomp,

pomp, no luxury, or parade; a secret charm of patriotism rendered them engaging, and they breathed a kind of military spirit becoming freemen (a): engaged neither in business, nor pleasures,

(a) I remember when I was a boy, to have been struck with a very simple sight, which has been imprinted ever since in my memory, notwithstanding the length of time, and the multiplicity of other objects. The regiment of St. Gervais had performed their exercise, and according to custom they sat down to supper in companies; most of the regiment met after supper in the square of St. Gervais, and all went to dancing, officers and soldiers together, round the fountain, on the basin of which there were drums, fifes, and men with flambeaus in their hands. When people have been exhilarated with feasting, their dancing does not seem to offer any thing very engaging to the eye; and yet the concerted motion of five or six hundred men in uniform, holding one another by the hand, and forming a long band, which winded in cadence, and without the least confusion, with a thousand turns and returns, a thousand sorts of figured evolutions, the choice songs that spirited them, the noise of drums, the light of flambeaus, and a certain military apparatus amidst a scene of pleasure, all this together formed a very agreeable spectacle, which it was impossible not to be affected with. It was late, the women were gone to bed; they all got up. The windows were soon full of female gazers, who inspired the actors with fresh ardour; but they could not confine themselves long to their windows, they came down; the wives flocked about their husbands; the servants brought wine, and the children, awakened by the noise, ran half naked to their fathers and mothers. The dance was suspended; nothing now passed but embracing, laughing, healths, caresses. From all this there resulted a general rapture, which I cannot describe, but which, in times of universal joy, we naturally feel, when

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asures, or at least what are so called with us, they passed, in that delightful uniformity, the whole day without finding it too long, and their whole life without finding it too short. Each evening they came home, gay and good humoured, to take their frugal repast, content with their country, with their fellow-citizens, and with themselves. If you desire an example of these public diversions, I will give you one mentioned by Plutarch. There were, he says, three companies of dancers, according to the three several ages

surrounded by every thing dear to us. My father embracing me, was seized with a palpitation, which I think I feel and share with him still. John, said he to me, love thy country. See here thy honest countrymen; they are all friends, all brothers; joy and concord are in their hearts. Thou art a Genevois; some time or other thou wilt see other people; but when thou hast travelled as far as thy father, thou wilt say thou never didst see their fellows.

They wanted to recommence the dance, but it was no longer possible: they did not so much as know what they were a doing; their heads were all turned with an inebriation sweeter far than that of wine. After staying some time on the square to laugh and chat, they were obliged to separate, each retired quietly with his family; and thus it was, that those amiable prudent women brought back their husbands, not by disturbing, but going to share their pleasures. I am very sensible that this sight, which so greatly affected me, would have had no charm to a thousand others: one must have eyes made on purpose to see it, and a heart to feel it. No, there is no pure joy, but that of the community; and the genuine sentiments of nature are felt only by the people. O dignity, daughter of pride, and parent of corroding care, did ever thy gloomy slaves taste such a moment as this in all their lives?

of nature, and each company made a chorus to the dance. That of the old men began the first, singing the following couplet:

*That active courage youthful blood contains,
Did once with equal vigour warm our veins (a).*

Next came that of the young men, who sang in their turn, beating their arms in cadence:

*Valiant and bold we are, let who will try:
Who dare accept our challenge, soon shall die.*

Afterwards came the children, who answered them, singing with a loud voice:

*Those seeds which nature in our breast did sow,
Shall soon to generous fruits of virtue grow:
Then all those valiant deeds, which you relate,
We will excel, and scorn to imitate.*

These, Sir, are the entertainments proper for republics. With regard to that which your article of Geneva obliged me to descant upon in the present essay, if ever private interest should establish it within our walls, I foresee its fatal effects; some I have mentioned already, more I might point out: but it would be shewing too great a fear of an imaginary evil, which the vigilance of our magistrates knows how to pre-

(a) Plutarch on the laws and customs of the Lacedæmonians, translated by Mr. Pulleyn of Trinity college, Cambridge.

vent. I do not pretend to instruct men wiser than myself. Sufficient it is for me, to have said enough to console my young countrymen, for the loss of an amusement, which would cost their country so dear. I exhort these happy youths to benefit by the advice which concludes your article. May they be sensible of, and may they deserve their good fortune! May they know how preferable is solid happiness to the vain pleasures that destroy it! May they transmit to their descendants, the virtues, liberty, and peace, which they inherit from their ancestors! This is the last wish with which I conclude my writings, the last with which I shall conclude my life.



E N D

ERRATA.

Page 17. line 9 from the bott. dele the first of. p. 19. l. 15. for *we do not share the affections* r. *we are not equally affected with.* Ibid. l. 9 from the bott. for *lady* r. *play*; and in the next line, for *her* r. *its*. p. 23. l. 2. for *dare* r. *don*. p. 29. l. 7. before *what* r. *of*. p. 31. l. 1. before *have* r. *to*. p. 38. l. 11 from the bott. for *such in their actions* r. *knows indeed*. p. 42. l. 8 from the bott. for *less* r. *more*. p. 48. l. 4 from the bott. for *with* r. *to*. p. 63. l. 10. from the bottom, at the beginning add *it*.

